Lilith

the independent Jewish women's magazine

Deciding a Sister's Fate

Special Summer Reading

Great Poems, and More

Bride Alert:

A Hot New Document for Your Jewish Marriage

How to Love Leisure

(brought to you by the women of the Lido Spa)

What DNA *Really* Tells Us

28, NO. 2
2003 $4.95

The Bridal Registry Collection...

from Gary Rosenthal

Available now at these and other fine stores and galleries:

Beth Tikvah - B'nai Jeshurun, Erdenheim, PA
Temple Beth El, San Pedro, CA
Congregation Ohav Shalom, Cincinnati, OH
Israel's Book and Gift, Toronto, Canada
Alef Bet Judaica, Los Gatos, CA
Gift Gallery at Adat Ariel, Valley Village, CA
Unique Gifts, Columbia, MD
Chosen Gift and Book Store, Miami, FL
Judaica House, Teaneck, NJ
Impulse,Provincetown, MA
Artisan Shop and Gallery, Long Grove, IL
Priceless Possessions, Paramus, NJ
Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Ana, CA
Traditions Judaica,
Aventura, Boca Raton, & Pompano Beach, FL
Westside Judaica, New York, NY

The Bridal Registry Collection from Gary Rosenthal introduces a spring-time palette to our already festive fused glass. The beautiful whites, pastels, and warm blues make the entire set a perfect and complimentary gift for the bride-to-be. Currently available are: Menorah, Sabbath Candleholder Set (shown), Candlebox, Kiddush Cup, Tzedukah Box in large and small, and Mezuzah. Go to www.collectgaryrosenthal.com to find a retailer near you.

www.collectgaryrosenthal.com

Lilith

Volume 28, No. 2, Summer 2003

2 **From the Editor**

4 **Kol Ishah** JEWISH WOMEN MAKE NEWS
New Queens of the Chessboard • Yoga, as in Torah • Jammin' with the Hebrew Mamita • Shebrews at U. Penn • and more.

FEATURES

11 **Think Tank**
Scientist ESTHER BRAUN SPARBERG on sexism in science, 50 years after Rosalind Franklin helped discover DNA.

12 **The Time of Their Lives**
A PHOTO ESSAY BY JOAN ROTH

Roth's peripatetic camera invites us to share the fun of the seventy-, eighty-, and ninety-something women gathering in Miami for the last days of the Lido spa.

18 ***Arubah*—A Pledge of Sweet Partnering**
BY SHAI CHERRY
Brides, beware! Don't frame that wedding contract! Your ketubah spells out the terms for *ending* a marriage, not celebrating it. Plus...KAREN PROPP navigates through the tsunami of new books about the institution of marriage.

SPECIAL SUMMER READING

Poems

10 **7 AM at the Western Wall**
BY YISKAH ROSENFELD

16 **Triangle Factory**
BY ARIELLE GREENBERG

17 **My Grandmother's Song**
BY MARGE PIERCY

26 **Journey Out of Europe**
BY MICHELLE CAMERON

27 **Strange Family**
BY LAURA BERNSTEIN

Fiction

22 **Who Was Wise** A SHORT STORY
BY DIANA COHEN CONWAY
Winner of LILITH's fiction contest.

28 ***Yizkor* and Life Lessons from The Book of Ruth**
BY LORI LEFKOVITZ
When we recite the *Yizkor* memorial service, we're really paying attention to our own tiny, ephemeral moment in history.

30 **Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear and Despair**
BY MIRIAM GREENSPAN
Self-help instructions to stifle rage, terror and sadness deny us the chance to survive these feelings robustly. A psychotherapist hints at what we can garner from the gloom.

34 **Guiding Spirits**
BY MALKA DRUCKER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAY BLOCK
Self-styled Jewish Witch Starhawk, Rabbi Laura Geller, Jewish Buddhist Sylvia Boorstein and the singer/songwriter/Pied Piper Debbie Friedman.

Cover painting: "The Letter," by Lynne Feldman, www.lynnefeldman.com.

Why is this magazine called Lilith?

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—FROM THE ALPHABET OF BEN SIRA, 23A-B

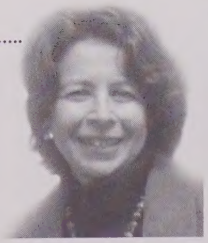
38 **Reviews**
A new generation of Jewish women's novels • an empathic encounter with girls and women who have eating disorders • new-wave anti-Semitism • and more.

45 **Creative Edge**
Art and artifacts to enhance your life.

46 **Tsena Rena**
LILITH's indispensable resource pages.

48 **Rabbi Julie, Take One** BY JULIE PELC
A 26-year-old rabbinical student faces the facts. She's young. She's inexperienced. She can't figure out how to dress the part. But she's gotta be the Rabbi (that's with a capital "R") anyway.

From the Editor



It has been a season of powerful images. A human skull on the floor of an Iraqi prison. An American soldier kissed by a child in Baghdad. Women, faces and bodies burqa-draped, striving to be seen. Suicide bombers and the carnage they create.

For weeks, I've had the strong feeling that we need some visuals of a different sort—to remind us, at least for a while, of what can restore us a little. And to suggest to us the peace we hope we can attain on a more regular basis, and on a global scale. We need to see images not of war, but of a joyous daily life. In this issue they come to us from the camera of Joan Roth, who caught on film the last days of the Lido Spa, a hotel in Miami Beach that for decades was a haven devoted to women's pleasure, women's relaxation. Unlike the current "spa culture" of busy female executives barely able to turn off their cell phones long enough to get a massage, the women Roth profiles, in ages ranging from late seventies to early nineties, give themselves up willingly to corporeal delights.

These women are, ultimately, optimists, even as they anticipate life after the Lido. They remind me of an aunt of mine, now deceased, a working-class woman who'd migrated to Winnipeg from her native Poland after suffering great privations during the First World War. She knew how to tell bad times from good. One day, when I was visiting from New York and we were listening to lively music, she asked me, "So. Where do you like to go dancing?" Go *dancing*? I was incredulous. "Auntie Tillie, I don't go dancing." She, in turn, was dumbstruck. I was in good health, of sound mind and understanding, and I *did not go dancing*??

Maybe it is time to reimagine leisure in our lives.

Roth, whose photographs of European and Ethiopian Jewish women have graced LILITH's pages and covers in the past, and whom we welcome to Lilith's masthead with this issue, went to Florida several times this spring to photograph the Lido's energetic guests. A friend had alerted her that this classic hotel was closing its doors. She went, she saw, she fell in love with the women. The wonderful pictures she brings us are entirely unironic. Far from the jokey stereotypes of Boca-based *bubbes*, the women we meet in Roth's photographs are real, zesty, and have a lot to teach us younger females about unabashedly enjoying ourselves.

Portraits of another sort come in our summer reading section: of women who are guides to more ethereal pursuits. Look at Malka Drucker's vignettes about Jewish women who have become spiritual leaders. Read what Lori Lefkowitz and Miriam Greenspan have to say about the ways we learn from loss. Though in keeping with the hopefulness of the women at the spa, this issue also brings a rich lode of poems, so that you can sit down and focus on some potent leisure reading. You have more poems here than in any other LILITH single issue, accompanied by extraordinary illustrations. Plus, the winning story in LILITH's annual fiction contest. As fewer and fewer magazines publish short fiction, particularly stories written by new and emerging writers, we're proud of LILITH's ongoing commitment to the form.

It's urgent. Jewish women's organizations had better band together right now to stop the erosion of our reproductive rights.

While the overseas war and its aftermath have occupied the airwaves for months, another, quieter, war at home is trying to is ravage women's rights. That's the war against hard-won reproductive freedoms. Many women who are now in their 20s and 30s have little historical and no visceral knowledge of the crises an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy often precipitated in the pre-*Roe v. Wade* decades. Illegal, back-alley abortions which were sometimes lethal. Women forfeiting the ability to plan careers. Dreams put aside forever. Young families cast into penury.

With Washington now trying to pack the courts with anti-choice judges, and with many states restricting access to abortion, we women had better be vigilant. But which Jewish women are going to take up the cause? The same cohort of Jewish women who would in an earlier era have been on the ramparts for safe and legal abortion are now worrying, instead, about infertility.

The trammeling of abortion rights is the canary in the coal mine. The erosion of these rights prefigures the slow stifling of other rights as well. This, then, is the moment for a coalition of Jewish women's organizations. Maybe we need a set of color-coded alerts (light pink to deep purple?) which will signal, week by week, how dangerous life is becoming for women of child-bearing age. It's time to band together to proclaim the rising dangers of monolithic anti-choice laws, and an anti-choice judiciary, as images of fetuses—called by the anti-choice activists, in a gnarled construction, "the pre-born"—wave in our faces.

Susan

Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor-in-Chief

5 WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF LILITH:

1. Subscribe
2. Renew
3. Buy a gift for a friend
4. Ask your library to subscribe
5. Send a tax-deductible contribution

Write us, fax us, call us, or email us today:

LILITH Magazine
250 West 57th Street, Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107
1-888-2-LILITH (254-5484)
fax 212-757-5705
lilithmag@aol.com
www.lilith.org

Lilith

Sustainers
Barbara B. Dobkin
Terry Satinover Fagen
Deborah Fuller
Ruth B. Goldston
Joyce Elsa Goodman
Michal Hart Hillman
The Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation
Francine Klagsbrun
Belda Lindenbaum
Natalie Pelavin
Sheri Sandler
Ruth Schnur
Bruce & Shelley Whizin
Whizin Foundation

Friends
Judith N. Herr
Ellen Reifler, in memory of Pearl Bettigole Goldberg
Eleanor L. & Stanley Zuckerman

Sponsors
Sharon Pikus
Rabbi Judy Shanks
Esther B. Sparberg, in honor of Alice Sparberg Alexiou

Donors
Marion Danis
Rabbi David Ellenson
Jennifer Mangel
Gail Zweibel

Lilith

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Susan Weidman Schneider
MANAGING EDITOR
Naomi Danis
EDITOR-AT-LARGE
Susan Schnur
NEWS EDITOR
Alice Sparberg Alexiou
FICTION EDITOR
Yona Zeldis McDonough
POETRY EDITOR
Marge Piercy
PHOTOGRAPHER
Joan Roth
COPY EDITOR
Melissa Aronczyk
ADVERTISING MANAGER
Leslie Hollis Margulies
ART DIRECTOR
Laurie Douglas

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Frances Brandt, Barbara B. Dobkin, Deborah Fuller, Yvette Gralla, Francine Klagsbrun, Natalie Pelavin, Brenda Brown Rever, Susan Weidman Schneider

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Diana Bletter, Sarah Blustain, E.M. Broner, Nina Beth Cardin, Elaine S. Cohen, Rachel Cowan, Sue Levi Elwell, Reena Sigman Friedman, Rela Geffen, Blu Greenberg, Judith Hauptman, Harriet Lerner, Anne Lapidus Lerner, Audrey Friedman Marcus, Shana Penn, Judith Plaskow, Nessa Rapoport, Danya Ruttenberg, Sandy E. Sasso, Mary Cahn Schwartz, Amy Stone

LILITH
250 West 57th Street, #2432
New York, NY 10107
phone: (212) 757-0818
fax: (212) 757-5705
lilithmag@aol.com www.lilithmag.com

Individual subscriptions $21/4 issues; institutions $27/4 issues. Canada add $6/year; overseas add $8/year (US funds only). Single copies $6, prepaid.

Change of address or delivery problems: Send label to LILITH, Dept. LIL, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834, or call (800) 783–4903 or (212) 757–0818.

Retailers: To carry Lilith, please contact BigTop (415) 643-0161 ext. 115, info@bigtoppubs.com

LILITH is published by Lilith Publications, Inc., a non-profit organization.

Copyright © Lilith Publications, Inc. 2003. All rights reserved under international and Pan American Conventions.

Associate member American Jewish Press Association. Available from University Microfilms International and on tape from the Jewish Braille Institute of America. ISSN 0146-2334.

LILITH occasionally makes its mailing list available to organizations or publishers. If you do not want to receive such mail, please send label and request to: LILITH, Dept. LIL, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834.

Kol Ishah:
The Voices of Women.

Traditionally, the **voice** of the Jewish woman was **not to be heard** in public, lest it arouse men. **No more.** These pages are for news about Jewish women, **in our own strong voices.**

Check This Out

Kibbutz Ha'meuchad Publishers in Israel has just issued *Tender Rib: Israeli Stories Until Statehood*, an anthology in Hebrew of 27 stories by 19 women, who were mostly excluded from the canon of modern Hebrew literature.

Knitting? Seriously.

Jessica Zalkin and **Rachel Petroff**, students at The State University of New York–Binghamton, have started a Knitting for the Needy program at their campus Hillel. The program meets weekly, and has attracted both women and men. Projects—the first was a blanket—will be donated to people in need. Hatikvah, the Binghamton Hillel news magazine, reports that knitting is now hot on campuses all over.

New Queens of the Chessboard

A chessboard is a surprisingly feminist terrain. The queen reigns supreme, leading the battle to protect a relatively feeble king. But look to either side of the board, and men are much more likely to be poring over it than women. That imbalance, however, has started to change. **Jennifer Shahade**, 22, is an example of the growing female presence in the chess world. The strongest U.S.-born female player ever, she is an International Master, and is now writing a book about women in chess.

Shahade played in her first tournament in third grade, with initially lackluster results. "My dad and brother were both chess masters, and I just tagged along. But then I had a couple good tournaments, and got really into it in high school." Since then, she has won tournaments, beaten grandmasters, and toured the world as a representative of the U.S. Olympiad team and of New York University, where she graduated with a degree in comparative literature.

In a book she's writing, due out next year, Shahade investigates the paucity of great female chess players. Some theorize that girls are not aggressive enough, "just can't think that way," or lack the physiological endurance for exhausting matches. A top female player even cited menstruation as a possible obstacle! More relevant, Shahade says, is the lack of a women's tradition in chess, or precedents for women's single-minded ambition more generally. "There aren't as many role models to be passionate or obsessed with anything. It's weirder to be spending all your time alone doing something."

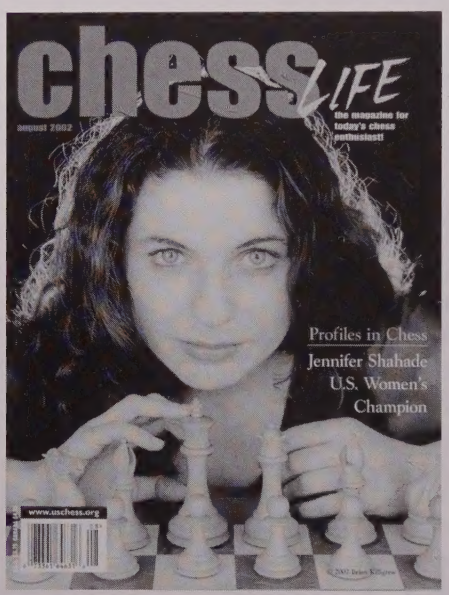


PHOTO BY BRIAN KILLIGREW, COURTESY U.S. CHESS FEDERATION

Males outnumber females by about 10 to one at chess tournaments, and only one of the top 10 players in the world is female. This one woman, however, Grandmaster **Judit Polgar**, represents a once-unthinkable wedge into the top ranks. Partly following her inspiration, there has been a surge in female membership in the U.S. Chess Federation, with more young girls playing and succeeding. Jennifer Shahade teaches chess in a girls' academy in New York, which hosts tournaments where some 100 girls play.

Despite these advances, sexism still crops up routinely in the chess world. Female players' appearances and attire are discussed in the press as much as their playing style. And in a recent lawsuit in Australia, a defeated male player accused his female opponent of distracting him with low-cut clothing. Shahade's own astonishing performance at the U.S. chess championship in Seattle in 2002 was dismissively attributed to her being "young, fresh, and female," and thus paired with "soft" players—an accusation that evaporates after you examine her games.

If women historically have been almost absent in chess, Jews seem to have been overrepresented among chess champions. Jennifer Shahade is half-Jewish (her mother is Jewish), and many other up-and-coming female chess players are Jewish, including Judit Polgar and Shahade's contemporary, fellow New Yorker **Irina Krush**. One of Jennifer Shahade's former teachers, **Leonid Yudasin**, is a grandmaster and Orthodox Jew. After an intense game between them, which ended in a draw, he impulsively shook her hand. She realized later it was the first time he had ever done so, because under his strict adherence to Jewish law he was forbidden to touch a woman not his wife. Afterward, an observer told Shahade, "Your best accomplishment was not the draw, but the handshake." Apparently, in that moment, her teacher forgot that she was "young, fresh, and female" and responded instead to the fact that she was an authentically worthy chess opponent.

—REBECCA TUHUS-DOBROW

Yoga, as in Torah

Five years of intensive Torah study left **Diane Bloomfield** craving quiet space and movement. One night, she dreamed of three women dancing. "In the dream, I knew they were praying," she says. "I realized I had to learn to pray with my body, to not just say the prayers three times a day."

Bloomfield left her Jerusalem yeshiva, moved to the Boston area and began taking dance and yoga classes. She noticed that yoga in particular deepened her connection to Torah study.

Jewish mysticism says the Torah is black fire written on white fire. The black represents the spoken words and the white is the space between them. To understand the black, you must also comprehend the meaning of the spaces, and yoga provides a way to quiet the mind and find the breathing room between the words, Bloomfield says.

SCOTT TARUSHIPIONEER PRESS

From that observation, Bloomfield, 43, developed what she calls Torah Yoga. She taught her first class in 1992, in Boston.

Each class includes warmup stretches, followed by discussion of a Torah text. Bloomfield then incorporates that text into a series of yoga postures, with the premise that the wisdom of the text is in the consciousness of the body.

One of her recurrent themes is the exodus from Egypt. Rearranging the letters in the Hebrew word for Egypt, *Mitzrayim* (which means "from the narrows"), reveals that the second and third letters combine to form the word *tsar*, meaning narrow or constricted, while the remaining letters spell *mayim*, the Hebrew word for water. Bloomfield notes that water is open and expansive, the opposite of constricted. The very word for Egypt describes the escape from the constriction of slavery to the freedom of liberation. She translates that concept into the body's desire to free itself from tight spaces, an important precept of yoga.

One student referred to Bloomfield's classes as "kosher yoga." But a few of Bloomfield's students have asked her how an observant Jew can practice yoga. "You can do yoga in a Jewish way. Yoga does not need to be connected to a particular religion," says Bloomfield, who does not incorporate Sanskrit chanting into her yoga practice. She wants to help students find a connection to the joy, healing and relevance of Jewish wisdom within their own bodies.

"When I first started, I was afraid I was going to betray my Torah study, or deny it," she says. "But yoga deepens my appreciation for Torah. It deepens you spiritually."

Bloomfield, now shuttling between Jerusalem and St. Paul, Minnesota, is writing a book about Torah Yoga scheduled for publication next year; in it she will explore seven Torah themes and their accompanying yoga postures.

Torah Yoga attracts mostly women. "There's something about women being more connected to the Earth and to their bodies as a way of knowing the world," she says. "Torah Yoga integrates the physical experience with the intellectual."

—JESSICA GRIFFITH

The Value of Friendship

Our friendships with other women not only make us feel good, but actually help us live longer, according to a UCLA study undertaken by six women scientists. Other findings: women typically respond to stress by nurturing their friends and children, whereas men either fight or isolate themselves. Noting this study, US/Israel Women to Women honored *Red Tent* author **Anita Diamant** and **Irit Umanit**, founder and former director of the Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter at a New York luncheon in May celebrating "The Power of Women's Friendships."

LIANA FINCK

kol ishah

Mazal Tov to:

Sheri Sandler and **Dr. Roslyn Milstein Meyer**, who received Women of Valor Awards from the Jewish Fund for Justice, an organization devoted to fighting poverty in the United States.

Debby Hirshman, executive director of the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, recipient of the Kol Ishah from Kolot, the program in women's and gender studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia.

Tikva Frymer-Kensky, winner of the Koret Jewish Book Award in the category of biography, autobiography, and literary studies, for her *Reading Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (Schocken Books; reviewed in LILITH, Spring 2003).

Linda Hirschhorn, whose new CD, Heartbeat, an *a cappella* celebration of women's voices with songs in English, Hebrew, Yiddish and Ladino, won two Contemporary A Capella Recording Awards (CARA), in the categories of Best Religious Album, and Best Religious Song.

Yael Feldman, professor of Hebrew Culture and Education at New York University, recipient of Histadrut Ivrit's Avraham Friedman Memorial Prize in Hebrew Literature.

The Hebrew Mamita

You've got to feel a certain affectionate respect for **Vanessa Hidary** when she pours out her "Hebrew Mamita" at Russell Simon's Def' Poetry Jam on HBO. She's out there, a multicultural Jewish girl from Manhattan's Upper West Side, demanding the largely black and Latino audience, "What does Jewish look like to you? Should I fiddle on a fuckin' roof for you?" Then she sings:

I'm the Hebrew Mamita/ Long-lost daughter of Abraham and Sarah/ The sexy, Oy Veying, matzoh-eating, Chutzpah-having, non-cheaping, non-conspiricizing/ Always questioning, hip-hop listening, Torah scroll reading, all-people loving/ Pride-filled Jewish girl!

Hidary's one-woman spoken-word performance, Culture Bandit, mounted this spring at New York's East Village Nuyorican Poets Café and the Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival, opens with the violin strains of "Fiddler on the Roof," then morphs into hip-hop

and climaxes with outrage at anti-Semitism and racism. This is her coming-of-age story—gobbling up Hispanic and black culture as a high school student in the 1980s, innocently hanging out with her Puerto Rican girlfriend and black boyfriend until he started wearing a leather pendant in the shape of the African continent and told her she was no longer wanted. As far as both blacks and whites were concerned, she was the "race traitor/race invader."

"1988—can things get any more complicated?" she asks as a track from Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever" movie starts playing. The blacks in the audience at the Nuyorican Poets Café laugh.

Although Hidary draws on clichés of Eastern European Judaism and attended Hebrew school at Reconstructionist Judaism's Society for the Advancement of Judaism, her mother's family is Syrian. She grew up with the affectionate nickname of *ketta bu jeh* (Arabic for "little cookie"). Hidary is her mother's original name. She considers herself a cultural Jew, and for now, she's keeping the Jewish message culturally simple.

"It's too confusing to explain," she says. "I've chosen right now just to tackle the Jewish thing in general, trying to do some healing with the communities."

Hidary wrote Culture Bandit when she couldn't find satisfying audition material. Now it's been optioned for a screenplay. "I don't know what else I care so passionately about," she says.

She's performing her one-woman show on college campuses. She says she is gratified to see Jewish students so excited, hearing a Jewish voice in a cool hip-hop environment.

Vanessa Hidary's spoken-word CD sampler, which includes "Hebrew Mamita" and three other pieces, is available by e-mail from Vjavaqueen@nyc.rr.com. Her website is www.hebrewmamita.com.

—AMY STONE

Weaving Women into a Multicultural Tallit

On March 1, 2003, **Amber Reid** became the first woman in her family to be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah. Her journey to the bimah began in 1972, before she was born, when her stepfather, John Price, began embracing Judaism.

Although those around him questioned the wisdom of an African-American man taking on the "additional burden" of becoming a Jew, he says he saw it instead as an "additional blessing." Increasingly committed to Judaism, John and his wife, **Karen Reid Price**, decided they would raise their children as Jews. The family read Torah together on Shabbat, hung a mezuzah on their door, and began celebrating Jewish holidays. As time went by and they realized that Judaism requires a community, they brought their children, Amber included, to my synagogue. At Beth Emet in Evanston, Illinois, they became active participants in a Saturday morning minyan.

Months before becoming a bat mitzvah, Amber and I began work on a tallit that would help represent her vision for herself as an adult Jew. (I had been making tallitot after a friend made one for me out of a hand towel from a Project Kesher retreat in Belarus.) Amber identified a quote from her Torah portion which I cross-stitched onto the *atarah*, the neckpiece. The quote, loosely translated, says, "Each man and each woman, all of whom were so moved, brought a free-will offering to G-d." She chose this quote because the Torah explicitly included women in this process and also because she saw her own journey to Judaism as one made freely by her and her family.

Inspired by a LILITH article from several years ago, I asked Amber's mother to gather textiles from the women in her family to be included on the tallit. Karen brought me fabric from one of her shirts, a handkerchief from Amber's grandmother, Karen Turner, and a clothing tag from her great-grandmother, a seamstress, Elizabeth "Ladybug" Turner. The handkerchief reminded me of one that I kept after my grandmother Beatrice Hendler died. To me, Grandma Bea was the consummate Jewish grandmother. I decided to include a swatch from my grandmother's handkerchief to represent the intersection of our families' histories and as a wish that Amber receive all the blessings of her heritage and her chosen religion.

A highlight of Amber's bat mitzvah celebration came when her grandmother presented her with a scrapbook tracing her matrilineal heritage, beginning with Ora, the first free-born woman in her family, and offered Amber a blessing—that she build upon the strengths of all the women who came before her. In that moment of creativity and love, you could glimpse the power of Amber's past and the promise of her future.

—KARYN GROSSMAN GERSHON

Amber Reid (left) and Karyn Gershon

LILITH Sadly Notes the Passing of:

Writer and photographer **Layle Silbert**, who died in New York this spring at age 90. Her short fiction and photos appeared in LILITH in the magazine's early years. Her photographs of Jewish women writers and poets have been bequeathed to the Dortort collection at the New York Public Library, and her literary works will be housed at the University of Chicago.

Absolutely No Comment

Scribner's has just signed a deal with psychologist **Mark O'Connell**, who teaches at Harvard Medical School, for his forthcoming book *The Good Father: Restoring Masculine Authority*. According to Publisher's Lunch, an on-line daily that covers the publishing industry, O'Connell's book will argue that men and women must "recognize and restore the force of masculine authority in their families and in their lives."

Finally—Women's Voices Ring Out on Eldridge Street

A year ago, singer **Elizabeth Schwartz** was booked with her klezmer band, Hot Pstromi, for a gig at the Eldridge Street Synagogue on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Then organizers realized that she wasn't allowed to sing.

The synagogue observes *kol ishah*, a practice which, among some groups of ultra-Orthodox Jews, prohibits men from listening to women sing, for fear it might lead to inappropriate behavior.

The show went on without her. But **Hanna Griff,** the Eldridge Street Project's program director, was determined to find a way to bend the rules. She decided that Rosh Hodesh, the festival of the new moon, was the perfect occasion to give women the opportunity they deserved.

Mama LaBushnik (l-r): Lauren Brody, accordion; Nicki Parrot, bass; Elizabeth Schwartz, vocals; Alicia Svigals, violin.

So on April 6, 2003, for the first time in the synagogue's 116-year-old history, the Eldridge Street staff turned men away at the door. And inside, women's voices chimed in song and celebration.

The event, titled "In a Different Voice: Music By and For Women," featured liturgical and secular songs performed by Hebrew Union College cantorial student **Kerith Spencer-Shapiro**, and klezmer music by an all-female group called Mama LaBushnik, with **Alicia Svigals** on violin, **Lauren Brody** on accordion, and **Nicki Parrot** on bass—with Schwartz, finally able to sing, at the helm.

Arlene Agus, a founder of the Jewish feminist movement and its first American organization, Ezrat Nashim, delivered a short speech to the assembly.

"I get very choked up in this building because it represents the history of our people," Agus told the crowd. "Less well known is the part of our history that is female." Agus, who has written extensively on Rosh Hodesh since the 1970s, is credited with its "rediscovery" as a women's holiday.

Schwartz was thrilled to have the chance to participate in the Eldridge Street event. "We look for pieces that express women's positions from the point of view of strength," she says, and avoids songs about "women pining after their men." The group's name, "LaBushnik," is klezmer slang, referring to the lead fiddle in Eastern European klezmer music. Appropriately enough, it's one of the few words in Yiddish that has no gender.

"The Eldridge Street Synagogue is becoming an important cultural venue," Schwartz adds. "The subjects of performance are very contemporary and very relevant, politically and culturally."

Griff had another reason to commemorate women at Eldridge Street: the synagogue, which also hosts literary events, tours, and educational programs, is run entirely by women.

The Eldridge Street Project is a not-for-profit cultural institution dedicated to restoring the building, now a National Historic Landmark. As the synagogue is slowly rebuilt, it is transformed not only through its physical renewal, but also through the stories told within its walls. And, for one day last April, the stories were told by women, voices raised powerfully in song.

—MELISSA ARONCZYK

Shebrews—What a Great Name!

They call themselves Shebrews, and it's the first group of its kind at the University of Pennsylvania: an unabashedly feminist organization for Jewish women. Penn has a few activities geared specifically towards Jewish women, including a Rosh Hodesh group and a Jewish women's book club, but Shebrews is aiming for a broader constituency.

"We started with the name rather than the idea," says Shebrews founder **Aviva Moster**, who graduated from Penn in May. Moster was visiting a friend at Oxford when she heard about a social event called "Hebrews and Shebrews," sponsored by the Oxford Jewish students' group.

"I thought, 'Shebrews. That's the best name ever.' It made me think *Jewish women*, and then I realized that there's such a dearth of Jewish women's programming at Penn. There's nothing for Jewish women just to get together, have a good time, and talk about women's issues in general, in a safe environment where women feel comfortable with each other."

Shebrews launched during the 2002-2003 academic year with events ranging from ice-cream-and-movie nights to self-defense classes and a sexual health seminar. The group also cosponsored a pre-Passover women's seder, where about 30 women shared kosher Chinese food, talked about the women they admired, and read from the Ma'yan feminist hagada.

And while Shebrews is not explicitly advertised as a feminist group, Moster says it is intended to fill that niche at Penn.

"I consider myself a feminist," she says. "I actually love that word. I wholly identify with it.…I'm really happy to say that Shebrews was founded as a feminist organization. I do realize and respect the fact that a lot of women don't identify with that word because I think that they have a different definition of what feminism means for them, but that's what Shebrews is about."

Moster says she doesn't want to alienate women who shy away from the feminist label. "I don't yell on my posters, 'this is feminism, this is a feminist thing,'" she says. "But at the same time, I don't appreciate it when people say, 'let's play down that this is feminist because we don't want to scare people away.'"

—CARYN TAMBER

Update: Women of the Wall

Women of the Wall has suffered a setback. The Jerusalem-based feminist prayer group has been fighting Israel's religious establishment for 14 years to earn their right to pray at the Western Wall in the women's section in any way they choose. In early April, the Israeli Supreme Court, in a 5-to-4 decision, reversed a year 2000 ruling that had recognized that right, with the exception that the group could not read from the Torah.

But the court now also unanimously voted that Robinson's Arch, a nearby archaeological site, must be made available within one year for the group's prayer service, which they hold every month at Rosh Hodesh. Otherwise, the court said, the group will be allowed to pray at the Wall.

This addendum to the ruling is "very hard to interpret," said **Bonna Devora Haberman**, one of the group's founders. "But it does set a time clock." Haberman also said that it is very unlikely that the government antiquities committee would allow any alterations at the Robinson's Arch site. In the past, Women of the Wall have been offered Robinson's Arch as an alternative to the Wall. But they rejected the offer; although part of the ancient Temple, the ruin does not have any special religious significance.

Others see the court's one-year stipulation as a way to delay settling once and for all an extremely volatile issue in Israel. At various times, Women of the Wall have been physically assaulted with everything from chairs to dirty diapers.

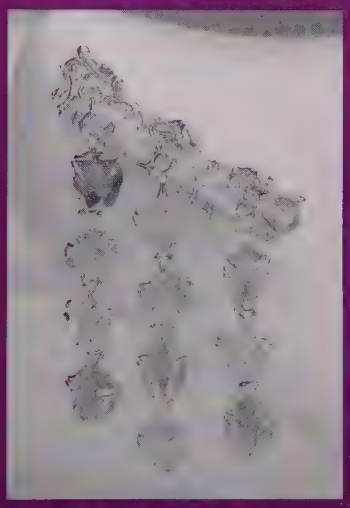
"The ruling is obviously a setback," Haberman said. "But women's participation in Jewish communal life will be confirmed."

Stay tuned.

—ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU ■

What to Give an Honoree

Margo Bloom has been appointed director of the New 14th Street (Sol Goldman) YM-YWHA in New York. The "Y" is part of the Educational Alliance, the Jewish communal institution that has served the Lower Manhattan population, both Jewish and non-Jewish, for 114 years. In May the Alliance honored architect **Daniel Libeskind**, who has been chosen to rebuild the World Trade Center site, and his wife and professional partner **Nina**. The Libeskinds will soon move back to New York from Berlin.



To mark their return, the Alliance presented them with a mezuzah crafted by **Joyce Goodman** (www.Jewelryby JoyceGoodman.com). "Doorways mark transitions," Goodman said. "Changing location, we change activity, attitude, and identity. And, as doorposts and a lintel offer shelter, rituals and objects reassure."

7 AM at the Western Wall

BY YISKAH ROSENFELD

7 AM at the Wall the men eddy and swirl,
wearing their prayers on their sleeves.
Angry old men with long beards
shout against the wall
as if it were a donkey
blocking the road.

7 AM at the Wall the women
rock and sway in heavy black shoes
moving their lips to silent music.
Tired old women kiss the wall
as if it were a long lost child
setting out again.

Answer us! demand the men
pounding the door to their King.

Speak to us, implore the women
whispering to their Lover
across a pillow of stone.

YISKAH (JESSICA) ROSENFELD is about to begin rabbinical school. Most recently, she was program coordinator of Kol Ishah: A Celebration of Jewish Women's Poetry, held in the San Francisco Bay Area, and her own poems and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies.

Historic photo of the Western Wall, taken in 1938 before there was a mehitza *dividing women and men. Photo by Sophie and Elihu Oshinksy.*

Credit for Demystifying DNA Denies One Woman's Role

BY ESTHER BRAUN SPARBERG

Fifty years since the discovery of the structure of DNA, Rosalind Franklin has emerged from obscurity. An upper-class English Jew, she was a brilliant experimental scientist, and an outstanding crystallographer. Her superb X-ray photos of DNA, made in 1951 when she was a researcher at Kings College, London, were a critical key to the discovery that DNA is a double helix. This landmark discovery, which provided the explanation for how genetic traits are transferred, led to the Nobel Prize for James Watson, Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins in 1962. Rosalind Franklin, their unacknowledged colleague, had died in 1958 of ovarian cancer—age 37.

Franklin is the subject of a recent biography by Brenda Maddox, *Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA*, and a documentary based on the book aired on public television this April. Maddox's outstanding book, thoroughly researched, is a finely detailed portrait of a talented, passionate, ethical human being who suffered indignities inflicted by misogynist co-workers, perhaps exacerbated by Franklin's own strong personality. They took her X-ray photos of DNA without her knowledge—that is, they stole them—thus gaining for themselves evidence crucial to their hypothesis about the structure of DNA.

I have just reread James Watson's *The Double Helix,* his self-centered 1953 account of the process of the DNA discovery, and was still outraged, as I was when I first encountered it, by his patronizing, flippant description of Franklin as a dowdy 31-year-old with "never lipstick to contrast with her straight black hair, wearing dresses that showed all the imagination of an English blue-stocking adolescent." He expresses no guilt at having used her work without her permission. Only in an epilogue does he try to make some amends. His latest memoir, *Genes, Girls, and Gamow* (2001), still does not credit her contributions. (And can you imagine a woman scientist using the title "Genes and *Guys*"?)

Women in the sciences, especially in Watson's era, usually suffered outright sexism and, if they were Jewish, anti-Semitism as well. I know from experience. I was born two years after Rosalind Franklin, and was the only woman in my class at the University of North Carolina to take a B.S. degree in chemistry. I'd been inspired by my remarkable father, who urged my sister and me to go into a practical, lifelong profession; since he was technically oriented, he recommended the sciences. My mother, too, was very supportive. But I had earlier applied to Penn State College as a chemical engineering major and had received a letter from the dean saying that this was "an inappropriate major for a woman."

> This misogyny is no surprise to an octogenarian Jewish feminist scientist.

Four colleagues at Rockefeller Institute, 1944. Esther Braun is second from left.

After graduation from North Carolina, I worked during World War II at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. In order to study the blood of malarial servicemen hospitalized there, I used a large, newly developed instrument, the electrophoresis apparatus for which the developer, Arne Tiselius, received the Nobel Prize in 1947. One day, my boss appeared at the door of my lab accompanied by three visiting Russian scientists, and I heard: "Such a little girl working with such a big machine!" His tone and words were so commonplace that I wasn't even offended—he was just articulating what was the prevailing male attitude.

I received a doctorate in the history of science and science education at Columbia's Teachers College in 1958 when my daughter and son were 7 and 11. I had been the only woman in our fellowship group of six. Later, in my career as a college professor, I sometimes was taunted and patronized, even after I had attained the rank of full professor. One incident sticks in my mind: at a faculty meeting, the chairman of the biology department, during a discussion about the necessity for laboratory work to accompany a science course for non-majors, pointed to me, and said, "Ask *her*. She knows all about kitchens."

Since the inception of the Nobel Prize in 1901, about 300 men, but only nine women, have received the prestigious awards in science. In her 2001 book, *Nobel Prize Women in Science*, Sharon Bertsch McGrayne lists 14—the nine who won, plus five who should have. Of the five, three are Jewish: Lisa Meitner (1878-1968), who made major contributions to the discovery of nuclear fission; Emmy Noether (1882-1935), the German mathematician; and—no surprise—Rosalind Franklin. ■

The **time** of their **lives**

BY JOAN ROTH

With the women who lunched, **lounged,** and **lived large,** we celebrate the **last days** of the **Lido Spa.**

It was the last massage, the last trip to the whirlpool, the last rhubarb and strawberry dessert at the final luncheon. For 40 years, women have flocked to the Lido Spa Hotel in Miami Beach, Florida, for some well-deserved R&R. For many, it was a second home. It was the little touches that counted: roses on Mother's Day, 80-year-old male dancers, and the special attentions of Terry Ross, entertainment director for 35 years. The hotel was sold to private developers and closed Memorial Day. Photographer Joan Roth captures the end of an era.

Terry Ross, the hotel's mainstay, providing nightly entertainment. "You know what, girls?" Terry reassures her spa-mates, "I'm not gonna retire. I had a life before the Lido Spa."

Facing page: After six months at the Spa, no one would dare take Mildred Schiller's front-row seat for Terry's "Shower of the Stars," or sit on her beach chair marked *Reserved*. At 93, Mildred still exercises daily. "What I learned from Terry," she says, "is that older women need a reason to get out of bed in the morning."

Left: Terry Ross—Teresa Aronson Grossberg—has her own plaque at the National Women's Hall of Fame, nominated by her four daughters. Her Saturday night repertoire always begins with *zmiros* (Shabbat songs). The same songs are requested over and over again. "*Hamavdil*," wishing everybody a good week, is a favorite. Even the few gentile women who come to the spa ask when she is going to sing it. Originally groomed to sing opera, Terry, 78, a navy nurse in WWII, went to college under the GI Bill and worked as a performer and comedienne in the Catskills.

Below left: "Ms. Florida 2002" Nan Houston Stenzi was the fifth runner-up in the Senior American National Pageant in Biloxi.

Below center: Anna and Carole Finholston. "We've been coming here for 12 years for Mother's Day," Carole says. Anna is President of Haddassah Three Islands.

Below right: Edith Leibowitz and Shoshana Baylin. Though their personalities are night and day, they always room together.

Down in **South Florida,** the Lido Spa **Jiggle** is the **best** form of **exercise.**

Top left: Clara Guritz has been coming to the Lido Spa for so many years she's lost count. She loves practical jokes. "One woman said, 'You may have a beautiful body, but an elderly lady shouldn't expose herself like that.' When she saw what it was, we laughed so hard."

Right and below: Down in South Florida, the best form of exercise is Terry's aquatics. "Lift your leg way up high, turn yourself around and giggle, giggle," sings Terry to the tune of Hava Nagila. As the women begin the circle dance, she hollers, "Presenting the Lido Spa Aqua Follies."

Top left: Terry greets her fans.

Top center: After Chair Aerobics at 9:15 a.m. in the gym, and Low Impact Aerobics at 10:00 a.m., two spry friends, ages 84 and 85, continue their workout.

Left: Poet Irene Bell at the juice bar. "Everybody has a story. I don't want to shock my family, so I don't put mine down in writing." A former paramedic and ambulance driver, she trained at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, and owned the first car wash in Brooklyn and a mobile trailer park in Monticello, NY. "When you live as long as me," she says, "you've done a lot of things."

Below: "Jacuzzi bubble bath, very soothing, very relaxing," explains Lydia Weisberg, a former recreation director.

Triangle Factory BY ARIELLE GREENBERG

Hook and eye, a girl is cut from a shirtwaist,
sewn up at the lids and temples, pulled
like thread through muslin through the work-
week. The earliest children are caught at her feet
in knots and dismissed without pay, or piled
under halves of woolen coats while the inspectors
look the crime scene the other way. Hook and eye.
A girl is fastened into a girdle, clipped to a garter.
She works harder—she has seven sisters at home
and none of them pretty enough to be a free bride,
all bent and smudged near the face. A girl
nicks a dowry in bits of lace, is dismissed.

A dowry. A girl is locked to her machine,
her mechanical husband, a treasure chest
of linens and doilies, makes a hole where a button
can go through. Takes up a hem, splits a seam.
Hooked to her wooden chair in the dim, dusty
light, a girl's eye is on her stitching, doesn't see
the fire begun in corners, how it catches up
a skirt or drape, and the doors and windows
barred—she can't go through. Soon every dye
is red, every bobbin a bit of coal. Hook and eye,
she is burned in a wad of Italians and Jews,
flammable as cotton, engulfed by her dowry.

ARIELLE GREENBERG's first book, *Given*, was published in 2002 by Verse Press. She is an editor at *How2*, an online journal of women's poetry and poetics, and teaches at Bentley College.

FROM *POYLN: JEWISH LIFE IN THE OLD COUNTRY* BY ALTER KACYZNE (OWL BOOKS/HENRY HOLT, 2000)

FROM *POYLN: JEWISH LIFE IN THE OLD COUNTRY* BY ALTER KACYZNE (OWL BOOKS/HENRY HOLT, 2000)

My Grandmother's Song

BY MARGE PIERCY

We were girls, said my grandmother
We went to the river with our laundry
we beat it on the stones, washing
it clean, and then we spread it
on the wide grey boulders to dry.

We were laughing, said my grandmother
all of us girls together unmarried
and mostly unafraid, although of course
as Jews we were always a little on edge.
You know how a sparrow pecks seeds

always watching, listening for danger
to pounce. We gossiped about bad
girls over the river and boys and who
had peeked at us as we passed.
We took off our clothes, hung them

on bushes and bathed in the cool
rushing water, telling of Maidele
who threw herself in the current
to carry her big belly away, telling
of ghosts and dybbuks, of promises.

Then grandmother would sigh and dab
a small tear, and I would wonder
what she missed. I would rather
bathe in a tub, I said, in warm water.
The mikvah was warm, she said, and

the river was cold, but we liked
the river, young girls who did not
guess what would happen to us, how
our hopes would melt like candlewax
how we would bear and bear children

like apples falling from the tree
so many, but a tree that bled
and some would just rot in the grass.
You never forget the ones who die
she said even if you only held them

two months or twelve, they come
back in the night and circle like fish
opening silent mouths and never
do they grow older, but you do.
Your hair hangs like strands

of a worn out mop, your flesh
puffs up like bread from too much yeast
or dwindles till your arms are brittle
sticks and the frost never leaves you.
I want to go down to the river

again, I want to hear the singing
and tell stories with friends we would
never tell in front of our mothers.
I want to go down to the river,
wade in and let it wash my bones

down to the hope that must surely
still form their marrow, deep
and rich in spite of the sights
that have dimmed my eyes
and tears that have pickled my heart.

MARGE PIERCY, LILITH Poetry Editor, has a new book of poems, *Colors Passing Through Us* (Knopf). Her memoir, *Sleeping with Cats,* is now available in paperback from Morrow/Harper Collins, and her latest novel, *The Third Child,* will be published in November.

באחד
On the first day toward Shabbat the twenty fourth day of Adar in the year five thousand seven hundred fifty eight since the creation of the world according to our accustomed reckoning here in the Town of Lincoln Massachusetts Rebecca Naomi daughter of Joseph and Susan Mulstein, and Michael Shai, son of Louis and Barbara Cherry in the presence of beloved family and friends entered into this covenant, each saying to the other
I take you to be mine according to the tradition of Moses and Israel. I shall cherish you and honor you as is customary among the daughters and sons of Israel who have cherished and honored their spouses in faithfulness and integrity.
I will work for support, feed and clothe you, and live with you as is the universal custom. In case God forbid I should die or give you a divorce I will grant you the consideration discussed earlier.
I promise to build with you a home faithful to the teachings of Torah, reverent of the Divine, committed to deeds of lovingkindness and linked to the history of our ancestors and to the future of the Jewish people. I promise to try always to bring out in myself and in you the qualities of forgiveness, compassion, integrity and humility. All this I take upon myself to uphold to the best of my ability.
By means of the traditional symbolic transfer, kinyan, we have affirmed the mutual agreement of the bride and groom
All is confirmed and abiding.

ELAINE ADLER

Arubah

A Pledge of Sweet Partnering

BY SHAI CHERRY

Would you ever think to frame your prenuptial agreement and hang it prominently in your home? If your *ketubah* is so displayed, you've done just that.

The *ketubah,* the traditional Jewish marriage contract, was a wonderful innovation to ensure that men provide their wives with the essentials during their marriage and to protect women in the event of the husband's death or divorce. Prior to the marriage the contracting parties would spell out the husband's obligations to the wife, often with references to livestock. The idea of planning for unwelcome contingencies and defending the vulnerable is great, and we can be proud of how progressive early Judaism was. Today's prenuptial agreements have the same function and have the added benefit of being egalitarian. But they're not romantic. And even if you were to have an artist and a calligrapher beautify your pre-nup, would you really want it hanging above the mantle?

Enter the *arubah.* Why not retain the sober *ketubah* to preserve our tradition's ancient attempt to handle the financial aspects of the worst-case scenarios, and create another document to record your love-intoxicated hopes for the best-case scenario? Many people choose to modify the traditional *ketubah* by adding, subtracting and translating. What I am proposing is to call this modified document an *arubah* but still retain the standard *ketubah* as a gesture of respect for its initial intent and the sanctity of tradition. The *ketubah* is not immoral. It's just inadequate. So rather than dispense with it, why not supplement it?

Rachel Adler, in *Engendering Judaism*, has created a hybrid document that honors *halachah* (Jewish law) but emphasizes that the marital relationship transcends the mundane. Although Adler's *B'rit Ahuvim*, or Lovers' Covenant, is a wonderful example of combining traditional *halachah* with modern sensibilities, the *B'rit Ahuvim* has the disadvantage of abandoning the traditional document that has signified Jewish marriages for thousands of years. And in our own case, since my wife and I flirt with the prospect of *aliyah*, not having a traditional *ketubah* might get us, or our future children, in trouble with the Orthodox religious establishment. So, as Kohelet says, "Two are better than one" (*Ec.* 4:9).

Arubah conjures up pictures of mutual support. The Hebrew root, *ayin, resh, bet* has a wide range of meanings. The most well-known sense of this root is *erev*, as in *erev tov*, good evening. Evening is when day and night mix together and even out, when each element brings what is uniquely wonderful about it and contributes that to the new mixture.

This image of mixing together is what provides the root with a sense of responsibility. For when things are all mixed in, what happens to one happens to all. The rabbinic expression, *Col Yisrael sZeh V'zeh*, All of Israel is responsible for one another (*b. Shevuot* 39a), captures the sense that we're in this together. Ideally, that's the way a marriage works—each partner feels responsible for the well-being of the other. And since witnesses sign the *arubah*, there is also an element of communal responsibility that is reflected through their participation. (Our *arubah* witnesses were different from those who signed the *ketubah*, thus multiplying the honors and widening the circle of community for both our wedding and our marriage.)

The dictionary definition of *arubah* is a pledge or a guarantee. The *arubah* can serve as a pledge to your partner spelling out your responsibilities for one another. What is each of you bringing to the other in this holy union? And how can your spouse support you best? A *ketubah* is not the right place for wedding vows; it's more appropriate for sheep and cows.

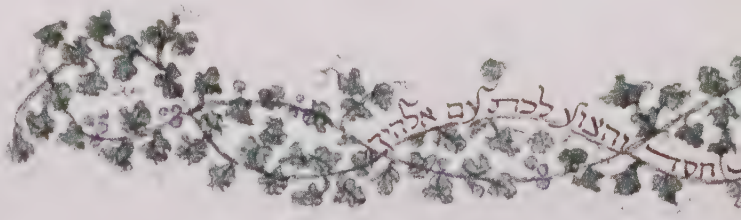
We borrowed some lines from Anita Diamant's *The New Jewish Wedding*, where she offers examples of new formulations for *arubot*: "I promise to build with you a home faithful to the teachings of Torah, reverent of the Divine, and committed to deeds of loving kindness. I promise to try always to bring out in myself and in you the qualities of forgiveness, compassion, integrity and humility." Each year on our anniversary, we reread our *arubah* to recommit ourselves to those pledges. Rereading a traditional *ketubah* would remind us, among other things, of how much it would cost to get a divorce. Although, in keeping with the intent of the traditional *ketubah*, we do make passing reference in our *arubah* to such possibilities and to the documents that spell out their financial formalities.

The other sense of the *ayin, resh, bet* root is that of sweetness. Two of the places where we find such words are in the prayer book. In the morning service we ask God to make the words of Torah sweet in our mouth. That's a sweetness that radiates from the palate throughout the body. It's sensual and, literally, mouth watering. (The Hebrew expression for delectable is *arev lachech*.) Love, like Torah, is addicting. It's so sweet we need to keep coming back for more.

At the beginning of *Kabbalat Shabbat*, we come across our root again in the first stanza of *Yedid Nefesh*:

> Soul mate, loving God, compassion's gentle source,
> Take my disposition and shape it to Your will.
> Like a darting deer will I rush to You.
> Before your glorious Presence humbly will I bow.
> Let your sweet love (*ye-erav*) delight me with its thrill,
> Because no other dainty will my hunger still.
> (*Siddur Sim Shalom*)

Each year on our anniversary, we reread our arubah to recommit ourselves to our marriage. If we reread our traditional ketubah, we'd be reminded of how much it would cost to get a divorce.



The Kabbalists, among them the author of this love song, understood that Shabbat was the regular re-enactment of the marriage between the male and female aspects of divinity which mirrored the earthly marriage. So when we sing *Yedid Nefesh* each Friday evening, the line "*Ye'erav lo yedidutach*" will trigger associations with our own *arubah* and *chuppah*, transporting us to the sweet space where we become, again and again, *chatan* and *callah*.

Now let's mix it all up. We have the combining of our lives. There's responsibility and interconnectedness. And then the sensual sweetness that finally blossoms into sexual longing in the lines of our Kabbalistic poet. All together, *arubah* might be translated as a pledge of sweet partnering. But why translate it? That's the beauty of the Hebrew. Who translates *ketubah*?

Although the word, *ketubah*, might not be translated, it is frequently read between the two parts of the marriage ceremony. Again, why interject the most unromantic possibilities right into the middle of a wedding? Let's live in the moment until the glass shatters. When our *arubah* was read under the *chuppah*, we noted that as God creates the world through speech, our new world was similarly being spoken into existence.

My wife and I have a traditional *ketubah*, purchased for $1.50, which lives in a manila folder in a file cabinet. Next to that manila folder is another more expensive document, drafted by an attorney, which serves a similar function. We hope never to look at either. But above the fireplace hangs the *arubah*, which bears our images and ideals, drafted by a modern Bezalel filled with "a divine spirit of skill," Elaine Adler. No cows, but there are caterpillars and butterflies. ■

SHAI CHERRY is the Mellon Assistant Professor of Jewish Thought at Vanderbilt University. He also teaches for the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School in Nashville.

ELAINE ADLER is a Judaica artist who creates personalized ketubot, Bar/Bat Mitzvah portions, family trees and other calligraphic works.

ADVERTISEMENT

Jewish Women International

Pursuing Truth, Justice and Righteousness: A Call to Action

July 20-22, 2003
Baltimore, Maryland USA

Be a part of JWI's First International Conference on Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community and join with hundreds of people around the world committed to creating a Jewish voice on the issue of domestic abuse.

Help articulate a global voice — a voice that will shape a movement that is Jewish in perspective and practice — a voice to be used as a model for other religious and ethnic communities — a voice to end violence against women.

Register today. Call 1.800.343.2823 or visit www.jwicalltoaction.org

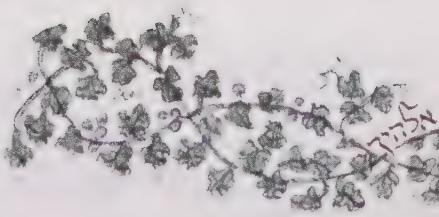
Envision a world where the Jewish community, once silent about domestic abuse, emerges as a global leader on the issue.

Jewish Women INTERNATIONAL

2000 M STREET, NW SUITE 720, WASHINGTON, DC 20036

The Path to Loving Relationships

Five Dramatically Divergent Directions



Is marriage still a viable choice for Jewish women? It all depends on whom you ask. For Susan Maushart, a sociologist and twice-divorced mother of three, marriage is about power and biology and—above all—women's fight for equality. By these criteria, marriage as an institution is appalling for women. Even the latest statistics report that a wife performs 70 to 80 percent of the unpaid household tasks even if she works full-time at a paying job. She is three times more likely to be depressed than her husband; and two thirds of the time she is the partner who initiates divorce. Most damaging, argues Maushart, is "wifework," defined as "the care and maintenance of men's bodies, minds and egos." She follows *his* sexual desires, edits *his* manuscripts, writes thank-you notes to *his* relatives and otherwise reflects back his best self. For marriage to be viable for women, advocates Maushart, we must cease living as "wives" and figure out how to live as our own, true selves.

For Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, marriage is holy and historical. She first learned this at age nine, in a displaced persons camp after the Holocaust. Having survived Bergen Belsen concentration camp, her father, an esteemed Hungarian rabbi, almost immediately began to make *shidduchim*. From this, Jungreis learned that matchmaking—the uniting of two souls for the purpose of family building—is about repairing the world; *tikun olam*. Although *The Committed Marriage* is packaged as a self-help book for the religious, it is more of a refreshing, if quirky, opinionated midrash on marriage as written by a stalwart woman who was married for 40 years. (Her husband, Rabbi Jungreis, who died six years ago, made matches for the hospital nurses from his deathbed.) At her Hineni Institute, Esther Jungreis uses biblical stories, homilies, and parables to comment on the contemporary couples she counsels. Much of the book is written as dialogues with young people who resist marriage or are unhappy with their present relationships. Throughout, Jungreis has two mandates for a satisfying marriage: develop a good eye and study Torah. A good eye (the term is from the Mishna's Rabbi Eleazar) is a benevolent attitude that allows one to see the good rather than the bad in others—especially your most significant other. Studying Torah, declares the Rebbetzin, is a profound tool for self-transformation, and one that gives strength and wisdom to solve personal problems.

Enter Nuchama King, with her debut novel, *Seven Blessings,* its title taken from the wedding liturgy. A kind of Jane Austen-meets-Jane Eyre-meets-Isaac Bashevis Singer's Yentl, King tells the story of Beth Wilner. *Frum* from birth, Beth now lives in Jerusalem, where she is single and a virgin at 39. Although she voices ambivalence, the narrative trajectory is to get her married. King shows us how the community's concern urges her toward marriage, but it's never quite clear if Beth herself wants to couple or if she is motivated by shame in being different from the tribe. Much of the novel is spun from conversations between matchmakers, Beth and two men who have become Orthodox.

Wifework: What Marriage Really Means for Women, by Susan Maushart, Bloomsbury, $14.95

The Committed Marriage: A Guide to Finding a Soulmate and Building a Relationship Through Timeless Biblical Wisdom, by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis. HarperSanFrancisco, $24.95

Seven Blessings, by Ruchama King, St. Martin's, $23.95

Marriage from the Heart: 8 Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together, by Lois Kellerman and Nelly Bly, Penguin Compass, $13.00

Jewish Interfaith Marriage: The Jewish Outreach Institute Guide to Opportunities, Challenges and Resources, by Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky with Joan Peterson Littman, Jewish Lights, $16.95

Beth gradually falls in love with Akiva, a 41-year-old macrobiotic housepainter and Talmud student, and when for the first time she sees herself in the mirror wearing the head coverings she will wear as a married woman, she is shocked to see the sadness in her eyes. "With a scarf she was more exposed than ever. And here she'd thought it would help her blend in."

For those who do not follow orthodoxy, whether in faith or in feminism, there is *Marriage from the Heart: 8 Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together.* Lois Kellerman, an Ethical Culture Leader, is, like Jungreis, a seasoned couples' counselor. A steadfast believer in what she calls a "soulful, robust marriage," one founded on deep mutual respect and kindness, she works with a population that defines its belief system as "spiritual" rather than "religious." Here is a typical sentence: "In a meaningful, happy marriage we find fulfillment by supportively accompanying each other on that [spiritual] journey." Kellerman's counsel and insights for what marriage can be are lovely, but this reader confesses that *Marriage from the Heart,* like so many self-help books, left me wondering whether any marriage could possibly meet these ideals, especially given what Maushart points out.

Finally, the Jewish Outreach Institute offers a basic guide to navigating the issues and challenges faced by Jewish interfaith couples. Rabbi Olitzky also sees marriage as a spiritual journey. He acknowledges the difficulties inherent in a union made from two different religious backgrounds, but throughout the book he affirms interfaith marriage and assures his readers with practical advice about ways to approach holidays, life-cycle events, and the range of emotions that arise between the couple and their extended families.

Still, Susan Maushart's feminist reality haunts. *Wifework* is clearly important as the descendant of a long line of influential texts written by advocates for women—but the equality between partners that Maushart fiercely defends is not what's at stake for the pastoral counselors. The long practitioners of marriage support kindness and a willingness to engage oneself on a journey with another. Which just might be a reason to get married after all. ■

—KAREN PROPP

 Winner of the Lilith 2003 Fiction Contest

Who Was Wise

A short story by DIANA COHEN CONWAY

Paintings by LYNNE FELDMAN

The time I saw Grandpa before, he could still tell long, complicated jokes full of Yiddish words, with punchlines I didn't always get. Now he sits grayly in a leather recliner, more asleep than awake, letting his four daughters handle everything. From my nook by the photograph album bookcase, I can see into the kitchen, a room almost as big as the living room and dining room combined. Aunt Miriam has brought everyone together for a first night seder, but, as Abba says, she has a hidden agenda.

My mother mixes mashed potatoes with schmaltz to make the knishes that our family won't eat. Aunt Nettie is cutting radish roses, the same color as her glossy fingernails. Her thigh-high skirt flaunts every womanly curve, so that I feel an uncomfortable flush creep from between my legs, over my growing breasts and up my neck to my cheeks. Aunt Ruthie, the retarded one—the thirty-six-year-old child Grandpa can no longer care for—polishes a set of real silver, counting and re-counting each pile of knives and forks and spoons.

Aunt Miriam pushes a curl of unruly Zimmerman hair under her Team USA Olympics headband and calls me into action. "Elisheva, get your buns in here and help Ruthie with the silver."

"Mimi!" says my mother. "Your language!"

"Don't be such a prude, Sara," says Aunt Nettie. "She could have said *ass*." She gives me a wicked smile as I slouch into the room.

My father has kept himself as far away from the provocative women as possible. He's sequestered in a back bedroom, the one the two younger sisters once shared, studying a volume of Talmud he brought for the occasion. In this secular household his curly *payess*, black Hassidic suit and *tzitzis* fringes make him seem like a visitor from outer space. As soon as we walked in the door, I felt our New York relatives freeze. The way I figure it, their life would have been mine if

Ima hadn't gone religious on her family. It's hard to tell which side is more afraid of the other.

The other man in the house, Aunt Nettie's husband, Ethan, stands with the door of the old-fashioned refrigerator wide open, fingering this and that. Aunt Miriam asks rather sharply what he's looking for, and he pulls a metal ice tray from the tiny freezer compartment on top. "You're gonna have to teach me all this Jewish stuff," he says as he pulls the handle on the ice tray and drops two cubes in a glass of scotch. "I mean, I know we're not supposed to eat pork or cross ourselves. I know we're supposed to support Israel against the Arabs, although frankly I'm beginning to have my doubts about some of that, but I think this is my first seder."

"You don't have *Pesach*?" says my mother.

"We hardly did when we were kids," says Nettie, as if she knows the criticism is aimed at her. "What? Once or twice with Mom's folks, once at a community seder for kids. After Ruthie was born..."

She leaves the thought unfinished. Ruthie looks up, smiles and repeats, "After Ruthie was born." She's overweight and has bad teeth, but you wouldn't know she was retarded to look at her. My grandparents didn't realize anything was wrong until she was almost four. I wonder if that's when my mother started getting more religious. She places one hand lightly on her belly. Her sisters don't suspect this sixth pregnancy, that she's hidden so well under a modest loose dress. I was so excited when I guessed her secret.

Nettie places her radish roses in a cut-glass dish and turns to wash scallions for *karpas*. "Really, I don't know why you're bothering with all this seder stuff, Mimi," she says. "We all know we're really here to decide what to do with Dad and..." This time she merely rolls her eyes at Ruthie.

"I like Passover," says Aunt Miriam. "The grand theme of freedom and justice for the whole world." She works as a lawyer in the Public Defender's office. I found a college picture of her in one of Grandma's photo albums, arm-in-arm with a bunch of hippie types.

"This is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt," quotes my mother, to remind her sisters that we're talking a religious holiday here, not a political love-in.

"It's all too sexist for me," says Nettie. "I can't believe those old Maxwell House haggadahs Mimi's dredged up. Our *forefathers*. The four *sons*. Moses and his *fore*skin."

Uncle Ethan chokes on his drink, and Nettie winks at me. I giggle in spite of myself at the foreskin joke, which makes my mother glare. Suddenly I realize that right in this kitchen we've got the four sons—excuse me, the four *children*, the four *Jews*. Ima, the wise child, who wants the whole exact ritual down to the *afikomen;* Uncle Ethan, the simple one, who needs it all explained; problematical Ruthie, who has no capacity to inquire but who stands at center stage, and Nettie, the wicked one, who doesn't see what any of this has to do with her.

Our Moses, Aunt Miriam, who called me into the kitchen in the first place, now sends me out again. "Do something with Ruthie, will you, Ellie?" she says. "We've got some business to discuss here." Like I'm too young to take part in the heavy decisions.

Grandpa turns his head from the T.V. when Ruthie and I come back to the living room. "What's cooking?" he asks. This is his standard greeting, but I choose to interpret it literally.

"Turkey." The smell of crackling fat makes my mouth water.

"Who are you?" he asks.

"Elisheva. Sara's youngest."

He makes me come over so he can fumble a quarter from my ear. I remember when that seemed miraculous to me. I kiss his freckled bald head and settle down with the photo albums and Ruthie. She, who usually speaks only by echoing the words of others, now amazes me by identifying every photo by name, even scores of mysterious cousins on my dead grandmother's side. Her nail-bitten index finger hovers over each shot, never touching the surfaces, as she recites, "Yossel, Dina, Rebecca, Levi and Leah."

"Look!" I interrupt, pointing out a stoop-shouldered figure in black at the edge of a family portrait taken two years ago at my grandmother's headstone unveiling. "Isn't that you?"

"Ruthie," she assents.

While we turn the album pages, I puzzle out the conversation taking place in the kitchen. The three sisters start out in whispers, but as the argument gains in heat it gains equally in volume. Ruthie seems oblivious to the discussion of her fate. Uncle Ethan escapes outside for a walk in the late spring slush.

"I don't see why you're agonizing over this so much," says stylish Nettie. "There have to be boarding places for people like her."

The sisters start out in whispers . . .

Mikveh
CD 4305

Lauren Brody • Susan Sandler • Nicki Parrott
Adrienne Cooper • Alicia Svigals

Mikveh; A Jewish ritual bath for women; an immersion; a renewal. Five of the top musicians on the international Klezmer scene have joined forces to create music that engages the experience and spirit of Jewish women. Combining traditional Klezmer tunes and old Yiddish songs with modern Yiddish and English singing and storytelling, Mikveh presents Jewish music through the prism of women's lives—from [illegible] daughter's bas mitsveh, and forbidden love to the [illegible] Friday night table.

'Fidl' CD 4286
Alicia Svigals Klezmer Violin

"Svigals...uses her own group to assert the traditional primacy of the Klezmer fiddle, which has been overshadowed by the clarinet in this century." *The New York Times*

Alicia Svigals is a master of the Klezmer violin. Her virtuosic yet intimate interpretations of the traditional Klezmer repertoire have made her one of the most important voices in Klezmer music today. Named "Best Klezmer Musician" at the Fifth International Klezmer Festival Competition, Svigals has toured and recorded extensively with The Klezmatics, of which she is a founding member, and appeared in the TV documentary In The Fiddler's House performing with violinist Itzhak Perlman. Accompanied by a host of Klezmer all-stars, Svigals brilliantly performs on the first album ever devoted to the traditional Klezmer "fidl" repertoire. Includes extensive liner notes by Zev Feldman.

Order On line: www.traditionalcrossroads.com
Order toll free (800) 422-6282
Or send a check to: Traditional Crossroads
PO Box 20320 Greeley Sq. Sta. New York, NY 10001

$14.00 per CD plus $3.00 shipping
MC or Visa accepted

TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS

"Dad tried that last year. She was miserable and begged to be taken home every time he visited. It took months to get rid of the head lice she caught there." This is Miriam, who has been checking in on them three times a week ever since.

My mother tries using guilt as her tactic. "Nettie's the only one who isn't working."

Nettie stamps one high heel on the kitchen linoleum. "Don't even go there. Just because I don't have a paying job doesn't mean I'm not busy every single minute of the week." She ticks off responsibilities on her red nails—Ethan's business entertaining, tennis doubles three times a week, low-impact aerobics twice, a kitchen remodelling project and fund raising for three charities.

"What could be more charitable than caring for your own sister?" says my ima.

"Take her back to L.A. with you, then," says Nettie.

Everyone falls silent for a minute. My stomach knots up. With Ima running a Jewish bookstore, and Abba at the rebbe's half the time, how could that possibly work?

My mother says, "It would mean separating her from Dad."

"Maybe we could move him out there, too," Miriam suggests. Does she think we should gladly bear this burden because we're the most religious?

I want to run in the kitchen and shout, "We've got a baby coming. There's no room for other people." But, even though my mother drives me crazy with her constant nagging and prohibitions on the one hand, and how quietly she accepts everything my father demands from her on the other, I know the news of her pregnancy is her secret not mine.

The outside door opens to let in a blast of fresh air as red-cheeked Uncle Ethan calls out, "Smells great in here, ladies. When do we eat?"

• • • •

The seder goes on until almost nine at night. My family eats on paper plates the food we brought from L.A. I fought with my mother over that. "Is it better to be a stickler for every little rule or to consider the feelings of Aunt Miriam, who will probably make kosher as best she can?"

"It's not up to us to pick and choose the rules we want to follow," she said.

Here's my question for God: Why not, if You gave us brains?

Aunt Miriam leads an abbreviated ceremony in English while my abba races *sotto voce* in Hebrew through his own haggadah. Ruthie's eyes close and her chin slips down several times before she gets to sell back the afikomen. Uncle Ethan asks if turkey for dinner means he can't have cream in his coffee.

He offers to help with the dishes. So do I, but the women don't want us in their kitchen. I imagine this is because they'll pick up their argument about Ruthie, but when I wander past the door after brushing my teeth, I'm surprised to hear them talking about me.

"She's a really nice girl," says Aunt Miriam.

"If you only knew," answers my mother with a sigh. "Of all my children, she's the only one who can't accept anything at face value."

Miriam rinses soap from an antique porcelain dish."That's because she's the smartest. Don't you remember how we were at that age? Trying to find the meaning of life?"

"Hell, yes," says Aunt Nettie. "Why else would Sara run off to join the Hassidim?"

"It was the sixties," Miriam answers. "You found the Rolling Stones and she found God."

"What did you find?" my mother asks her, but Miriam doesn't answer. Instead she says, "It's going to be hard on Ellie if your latest turns out to be like Ruthie."

I feel a cold hand at my throat. If I'm so smart, how come I hadn't thought of that? Would God do that twice to our family? No wonder Ima held back the news from her sisters. I slump against the wall, which creaks like an old floor.

Aunt Miriam calls out, "Come in, if you're going to skulk about in doorways."

"Did she tell you about the baby?" asks my mother.

"Of course not," says her older sister. "You always get those dark circles under your eyes when you're pregnant."

I don't want them to send me away again, but I have to ask. "Mom, how old were you when Ruthie was born?"

Nettie answers for her. "Thirteen, honey, just like you. I was only ten, and believe me in those days it was something to have a retarded sister. I should have a nickel for every kid I punched. Lucky Mimi got to go off to college and leave us to deal with the mess. And she's still trying to push it off on us."

My mother starts to cry. I put my arms around her waist. "It won't happen," I say. "I know the baby will be O.K." Then I realize she's crying for Grandpa and Ruthie, too. Pesach is supposed to be a time of hope and renewal. This one is turning into a major downer.

Aunt Miriam protests that she would gladly quit her job to care for Ruthie and Grandpa, but they need her income to pay the property taxes. I always thought my grandparents were rich, because they hung velvet drapes at the windows, but now I realize that the house seems half the size it did when I was a kid, the ceiling plaster is cracked and blackened and the carpet is rubbed bare between the sofa and the T.V.

• • • •

Uncle Ethan and Abba have been talking together in the living room since *"Next year in Jerusalem."* Now they join us in the steamy kitchen. My uncle snags a piece of cold turkey from the gold-edged platter. My father says, "We've decided it's best if they come back to California with us. We can hire a day nurse while Sara is downstairs in the bookstore."

Aunt Miriam sighs loudly in relief. Aunt Nettie says, "I should think Sara would have something to say about that."

Everyone looks at my mother. She takes a long minute before answering *no*. I can't believe I've just heard her disagree with my father.

He frowns and turns her refusal into a question. "No, Sara?"

"Yes, they can come to California with us," she says, "but only to the Jewish home on Crenshaw. It's a good place. We'll visit them, watch out for their care." She rests her hands on her belly and adds, "I can't take them in my house. I can only do so much."

"We've got a baby coming. There's no room for other people."

"You tell them!" says Nettie.

"You tell them!" Ruthie echoes from the dining room, where she is pushing a carpet sweeper around and under the table. She doesn't know her fate has been decided.

"How will we pay for the home?" asks my father.

"We'll sell this house."

They ask me to help Ruthie to bed. We both kiss Grandpa goodnight where he sits in front of the T.V. news. There's been another bombing in Jerusalem. "What does God want?" he asks me.

"I wish I knew, Grandpa."

While I make sure Ruthie uses the toilet, I listen to the kitchen voices. Aunt Nettie says Ruthie should be able to adjust to a home if Grandpa is by her side. Aunt Miriam says, "Maybe we can come out to your place next year. You can show us how to do Pesach right." My mother says she'd like that.

I tuck in my aunt and her furless teddy bear. "Good night, you two. Next year in Los Angeles."

"Next year in Los Angeles," Ruthie echoes. ■

DIANA COHEN CONWAY is the author of the picture book *Northern Lights: A Hanukkah Story* (Kar-Ben). She taught Spanish at Anchorage Community College for 20 years and now lives on an island in Kachemak Bay, Alaska, where she gardens, fishes for king salmon and writes stories for children's magazines.

LYNNE FELDMAN is a painter, printmaker and illustrator. She lives in Rochester, New York. www.lynnefeldman.com or (585) 473-2240.

Journey Out of Europe

BY MICHELLE CAMERON

If there's a sound she remembers,
it's the creaking of the rope
as she walked across the ramp

of the ship floorboards
of the entire floating slum

the groaning of a dozen sick men
leaning precarious over the rails
their vomit flicking
the sides of the portholes

the women, too busy—
with crying children or
that the unsafe clambering
ones didn't end up perilous
—to succumb themselves.

Years later, she'd wake
to feel swaying rocking
her tenement bed

and she'd toss and turn, restless,
upon a port that somehow
despite years now put into harbor,
refused to be less uncalm, unsure.

MICHELLE CAMERON's poetry has appeared in many online and print publications. She lives in New Jersey, where she is a founding member of No Retreat, a women's poetry collective.

© BETH GROSSMAN, WWW.BETHGROSSMAN.COM

Strange Family BY LAURA BERNSTEIN

On Friday nights Bubby drags three over-stuffed chairs
like they were sacks of grain or sand
across the balding green carpet;
she serves supper on Deputy Dawg
and Yogi Bear folding tray tables.

This strange family, an elderly man and woman,
tiny as sparrows, and an oversized girl
watch Star Trek reruns followed by Dance Fever.
For once Bubby sits while they eat, though the girl
can never remember fork or bread or any food
at all moving to the old woman's lips. She can't
picture the old woman swallowing anything
except tiny glasses of sweet liqueur
from a back kitchen cupboard, and that only rarely.

Perhaps the girl is lost in Kirk or Spock,
both of whom she wants to marry.
Or perhaps she only wants to be them,
to dissolve in electric pinpricks,
ride to Heaven with a wink and a raised eyebrow,
this girl who already grunts when lifting herself
from the chair, who lately feels her body
moving five steps behind her shadow.

At Dance Fever they all try to guess the winning pair.
The girl always chooses those that spin highest
and hardest, the man who tosses his sparkly partner
into the sky as she were a handkerchief, the woman
pirouetting up there impossibly long before
landing with a hush in her partner's arms.
Every week the girl chooses wrong,
her Bubby and Zaidy right every time.
They understand subtlety, the softest turn of ankle
and waist, they understand the moments
between the movements. They know quiet
is not despair. They know how to wait.

LAURA BERNSTEIN is a poet in Detroit, Michigan.

HADAR KIMCHY-SHILOH, WWW.HADARKS.COM

MOVING ON YIZKOR AND LIFE LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH

BY LORI LEFKOVITZ

The Book of Ruth in the Bible is a pastoral romance about moving on in life. We read it on the holiday of Shavuot, one of the four times each year when we recite the *yizkor* memorial service. Ruth begins with a family of four that once upon a time ("when the chieftains ruled") left Bethlehem (literally, "The House of Bread") for Moab when Bethlehem was experiencing a famine. We are no more than a few verses into the story when we discover that there have since been marriages and deaths in this family: the father is dead, as are both sons, leaving only the widow Naomi and her two foreign daughters-in-law, one of whom soon leaves her. We start with depletion: no bread, a move away from home, loss of husband, and loss of both children.

As you know, the rest of the story transforms the tragedy into comedy. Tragedy, by time-honored definition, ends in death, a cutting off of the future; comedy ends in marriage, an opening up of the future. Naomi decides to go home. Ruth, famously, insists on accompanying her ("Wherever you go, I will go…"), and despite the unlikely odds, a distant relative marries Ruth. A baby is born to Ruth and given to Naomi. As the story ends, we learn that this baby will be the grandfather of King David, who, in turn, legend tells us, will be the ancestor of the Messiah, the figure who will someday usher in the redemption of the world.

I am struck by how far this story stretches into the past before and the future beyond these episodes in the life of a widow and her daughter-in-law. This little romance ends with Ruth and a newborn baby, and most of us freeze the frame there. But the genealogical epilogue actually invites us to glimpse this newborn as a grandfather, grandfather of King David. Just a shape on his grandmother's lap, we learn nothing about the baby's later life except that he has a bright genetic future.

Similarly, Ruth's story begins with an undisclosed prehistory. The text alludes to a full earlier life, from the hunger that led to the decision to leave home to the wedding ceremonies that bridged cultures, but the characters of the dead men are left to our imagination, part of the plot's deep background.

It's as if, on this long timeline—with ancient roots in Bethlehem that extend through David and stretch on to eternity—someone placed a magnifying glass on a single tiny dot on the line, a little detour in and out of Moab, in which two women who survived great personal losses befriended one another and found a way to move on, redeeming us all through their promising new baby. Thought of in this way, we might just as well move the magnifying glass to any other place on the line and find ourselves in another story on the way to redemption with different characters on different adventures, whose lives share the simple facts of birth and death.

DUTTON CHILDREN'S BOOKS, A DIVISION OF PENGUIN YOUNG READERS GROUPS. A MEMBER OF PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC, 345 HUDSON ST., NEW YORK NY 10014. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

As I grow older and see more deaths, I find myself startled by how compressed a life becomes after death. No sooner is someone gone from life than we struggle to remember the subtleties that constitute the fullness that was a person. But over and again, I see how friends and family report the same important incidents, name the same salient character traits, the best and worst qualities, and so a person is reduced to the bold strokes that merely suggest his or her likeness.

Recently, my father's cousin Ethel suddenly died. My family was used to taking her presence for granted. An unassuming person who lost everyone in her original family in the Holocaust, her response to devastating loss was to affirm life. She never missed a family simcha. She flew to the cornfields of Ohio when our daughter Ronya was born, carrying the bagels from New York, and she was with us in Philadelphia for Ronya's bat mitzvah. I certainly expected her to be at Ronya's wedding. But she died, just like that, of a fall.

Ethel was buried just beside my mother's mother. It was the first time in 13 years that I stood before the graves of my grandparents. I heard my mother say, "Hi Mama, Ethel is joining you," and I suddenly remembered that though they were unrelated, the two women had been great friends. A long dormant memory of my grandma chatting in the living room surfaced.

My grandmother's death was the first terrible loss of my life. The world seemed newly vacant. I still remember that the only thing that somebody said that gave me any comfort at all was when my cousin Lenore, who had recently lost her father, whispered to me: "the pain does not go away, but you learn to live with it." I realize that at the time what was even more unbearable than the pain of loss was the idea that I would ever recover from it. It seemed a grievous betrayal of what my grandma had meant to me. And so it is that Nessa Rapoport, in *A Woman's Book of Grieving*, advises that when you meet someone newly in mourning, "do not speak of inner sustenance, of benefit from sorrow or of healing. Do not say that time repairs, or talk of moving forward or of growing. Such consolations are absurd. Offer only this: I, too, have suffered and endured."

What we offer each other at *yizkor* services is company in sorrow, proof that we suffer and endure. From a cosmic perspective, each of us is a small spot on intersecting timelines, and during the years of our lives, the magnifying glass is positioned over our small time and place. And so it is that mostly we hold fast to life. At the same time, although some people, usually young people, rage at the prospect of dying, most approach the end of life relatively serene, with a growing detachment. Focused on remembering the past and blessing the future, it is as if they become aware of their place on an infinitely extensive trajectory.

When I read the ending of the Book of Ruth this year, I wanted to jump into the story and tell the mother and grandmother the secret importance of their baby in much the same way as we have moments when we wish that someone who is dead could take pride in their future by seeing us now. Maybe this is why we interrupt our holidays with *yizkor* services, to acknowledge the absences that inevitably compromise our celebrations. We shatter glass at our weddings in part to keep us mindful that all celebration is compromised by loss.

But I wonder if The Book of Ruth is not wise to tell the story of recovery without attempting to capture what was lost. Significantly, Ruth's first husband is memorialized through the child she has by his kinsman. Perhaps he remains present too in some trick of communicating tenderness that Ruth learned from him and which continues until today in a chain of people that includes those whose lives Ruth herself touched. How exactly the future will manage to contain the past is ultimately mysterious.

FROM A COSMIC PERSPECTIVE, EACH OF US IS A SMALL SPOT ON INTERSECTING TIMELINES, AND DURING THE YEARS OF OUR LIVES, THE MAGNIFYING GLASS IS POSITIONED OVER OUR SMALL TIME AND PLACE.

What is certain is that the future will contain (and from a Jewish view, will redeem) the past, no matter how deeply that past seems to retreat. An awakened memory may sometimes surprise us or we may notice an ancestral feature in a sister's grandchild, but just as important, our bodies remember what our minds forget. That Daddy held us closely as babies or teased out our first giggles is preserved in our characters rather than in our memories. And each of us carries genetic material in our bodies that is as old as life on the planet. Within days of her death, I was more aware of the feel of Ethel's kisses than of the words she spoke.

Naomi and Ruth left behind the remains of husbands and children in order to start over, and what they carried in their hearts and bodies we will never know. What we know that they never knew is that their moving on in life carried the promise of blessing for all of us. The Book of Ruth triumphs over death by intimating the widest possible perspective on life. The way we honor the dead is to live with the conviction that our lives are infinitely promising no matter how grim things may seem, and that the promise of our own futures is partly owed to the many, often intangible ways that our departed have shaped who we are. ■

LORI LEFKOVITZ is Gottesman Professor of Gender and Judaism and Academic Director of Kolot at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. She co-edited, with Julia Epstein, *Shaping Losses: Cultural Memory and the Holocaust.* This fall, as a Fulbright senior scholar at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, she will teach American Jewish Feminism.

THE WISDOM OF GRIEF, FEAR AND DESPAIR

HEALING THROUGH THE DARK EMOTIONS

BY MIRIAM GREENSPAN

My third child was born with a neuromotor disability that has no name. She walks with leg braces and a body brace. Her hand use is severely limited. Her muscle tone is neurologically weak throughout her body, her coordination so poor and her muscle-sense so limited that she broke 11 bones in the first eight years of her life.

Esther has spent too many moments of her young life in pain. Her life is more limited than most. Yet she's one of the happiest people I know. While her neurological system bogs her down, her emotional genius keeps her buoyant. Most of what I know about emotional alchemy comes from what she teaches me on a daily basis.

What I know about the alchemy of fear has not just come from the work I do as a psychotherapist. Mostly, it has come through facing my own demons.

Here's how fear's alchemy found me.

Esther had just learned to walk when she vaulted herself out of her crib. For more than two years, she'd been a fitful sleeper, especially after a particularly difficult motor milestone. Learning to walk was a mammoth accomplishment, requiring careful, continuous patience on her part and ours, because Esther did not learn to move without hours and hours of coaching and assistance. For weeks after her walking triumph, Esther didn't sleep for more than two or three hours at a stretch. Getting her down to sleep was harder than ever. Bleary-eyed, we'd consulted a sleep expert who advised us to let her know that we'd be in the next room and then leave her in her crib until she cried herself to sleep.

Roger and I retreated to our bedroom, holding our hands over our ears. Esther did not cry herself to sleep. She cried herself into a majestic leap over the bars of her crib, vaulted by tears of rage. The fact that she was able to do it was the only silver lining in this episode. (It's amazing what the energy of fear and anger can do!) Running into her room after we heard her fall, we found her dazed and whimpering, but apparently okay. By the next morning, however, she awoke with her neck tilted rigidly to the right. And we were off to Children's Hospital again, a place we've come to know all too well.

DUTTON CHILDREN'S BOOKS, A DIVISION OF PENGUIN YOUNG READERS GROUPS. A MEMBER OF PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC, 345 HUDSON ST., NEW YORK NY 10014. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The orthopedist called it torta collis. His assessment was alarming: Esther probably had a slipped cervical disc. She might well need hospitalization and traction. A CAT scan was scheduled for the following Monday, and she was discharged for the weekend under our care.

"Be careful that she doesn't fall again," the good doctor said, casually, as we got ready to leave, "or she might have further neurological complications."

"Like what?" I asked, ever the one to know the possibilities.

"Like paralysis from the neck down."

Uttered with a disarming nonchalance, these careless words were a mainline of fear shot straight into the chambers of my heart. Had we come this far with Esther only to lose her to mundane falls that could make her quadriplegic?

I descended into a raw terror that would not loosen its grip for the next two days, a ragged zone of fear about Esther's fragility. When not with Esther, I paced the floor praying for her safety. Feelings this powerful often compel us to seek comfort, distraction, or oblivion. But these options seemed useless. There was no pill or drink or TV program strong enough to distract me.

After several hours of trying vainly for some relief through sleep, I saw that there was no escape. I remembered a bit of advice that my midwife had given me when I was in the grip of labor: when you feel the pain coming, head straight into it. I decided to head straight into the fear, to make fear my meditation.

All night, I lay awake, experiencing a succession of physical and mental states that I tried to witness without flinching: a numbing cold in my extremities, my gut churning, my chest radiating with the sensation of hot dry ice. I watched my mind tell tragic tales about my life with a child impossible to protect: Esther paralyzed and unable to move, all her progress finished for all time. Esther in a wheelchair, immobile. Our lives in ruins. After a seemingly endless time, I noticed a shift: the fear felt less like a siege and more like an energy moving through me. I began to be more curious about it, to just notice it.

At four in the morning, the fear broke, like a fever. And my mind's agitation came to a full stop. I was thoroughly awake, in a state of wonder. Somehow, mysteriously, my heart had emptied itself and I was lifted up, in a state of inexplicable ecstasy. My face awash with tears of joy, I felt as though I could burst with it. Whatever this child brought me was going to be all right, I thought. At the same time, a warm energy coursed through my body, concentrating itself in my hands, which were now hot and tingling. A voice, quiet but insistent, said: "Go to your child."

When voices like this insist, I do my best to listen. I got out of bed and followed directions, extending my hands over Esther's body in the darkness. The energy seemed to stream out of my hands towards her sleeping form. After a timeless time, the voice said: "She's all right."

Another voice—the doubting voice that hardly ever leaves me, despite my many experiences as a reluctant mystic—whispered in my head, "This is really nuts. You've finally flipped." I decided to ignore it, since it seemed to have nothing constructive to say.

JOYFUL LIVING IS NOT THE SAME THING AS LIVING WITHOUT FEAR. IT'S ABOUT LIVING FULLY WITH FEAR.

Returning to my bed I saw the light begin to dawn, a rosy glow against the darkness. In my mind's eye, a book, open to the table of contents, appeared to me. Looking closer I could actually see the chapter headings laid out before me: Grief and gratitude, fear and joy, despair and faith. I grabbed the pen and paper I always keep at my bedside and managed to scribble these words down before falling into a welcome, dreamless sleep.

When I awoke a short time later, I felt impossibly rested and calm.

We returned to the orthopedist on Monday, who declared with obvious befuddlement that Esther's CAT scan was normal. He wanted to do more tests, to see if there were some other "anomalies." We politely declined and took our daughter home. Esther's crooked neck straightened itself out and has not been a problem since.

A portrait of your family...

Commissioned oil paintings by
LYNNE FELDMAN
For free brochure
www.lynnefeldman.com
(585) 473-2240
250 North Goodman St., Rochester, NY 14607
SERIGRAPHS • OIL PAINTINGS • COMMISSIONS

A CALL TO BRING THE SETTLERS HOME TO ISRAEL

We are American Jews who care deeply about Israel and who are filled with sorrow by the continuous cycle of violence and death in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We call upon the United States government to embrace an initiative which can break through the present stalemate, create a new opening for a negotiated settlement, safeguard the lives of Israeli settlers and remove a major obstacle to peace.

We call upon the United States government:

- to urge the Israeli Government to reverse its longstanding financial inducements to Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and instead to redirect those funds to settlers who are now willing to return to Israel proper;
- to provide generous foreign assistance and to solicit contributions from the European Union, other major industrial democracies and the United Nations for this massive relocation effort, irrespective of whether the Israeli government is ready to participate.

Partial List of Signers

Eric Alterman
Anita Altman
Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld
Geoffrey Aronson
Foundation for Middle East Peace
Adrienne Asch
Ed Asner
Diane Balser
Rabbi Micah Becker-Klein
Jessica Benjamin
New York University
Rabbi Philip Bentley
Jewish Peace Fellowship
David Biale
Theodore Bikel
Chana Bloch
Rabbi Herbert Brockman
Rabbi Herbert Bronstein
Cherie Brown
Break the Silence
Daniel G. Cedarbaum
President, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Michael Chabon
Rabbi Ayelet S. Cohen
Tamara Cohen
Adrienne Cooper
Barbara Dobkin
Ariel Dorfman
Duke University
Rabbi Malka Drucker
Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell
Melodye Feldman
Seeking Common Ground
Gordon Fellman
Brandeis University
Nan Fink Gefen
Chochmat HaLav
Marcia Freedman
Former Member, Israeli Knesset
Rabbi Dayle A. Friedman
Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer
Rabbi Rachel Gartner
Rabbi Shai Gluskin
Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold
Harvard University (Emeritus)
Linda Gordon
New York University
Vivian Gornick
Sally Gottesman
Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Rabbi Suzanne Griffel
Morton H. Halperin
Open Society Institute
Rabbi Debra R. Hachen
Rabbi Jill Hammer
Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg
Susannah Heschel
Dartmouth College
Arnold Hiatt
Former CEO, Stride Rite Corp.
Adam Hochschild
Inge Hoffmann
Stanley Hoffmann
Harvard University
Dr. Lori Hope Lefkovitz
Paula Hyman
Yale University
Herbert C. Kelman
Harvard University
Alice Kessler Harris
Columbia University
Naomi Klein
Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum
Irena Klepfisz
Rabbi Douglas E. Krantz
Board, Americans for Peace Now
Tony Kushner
Rabbi Mordechai Liebling
Robert Jay Lifton
Harvard Medical School
Rabbi Rebecca Lillian
Rabbi Ellen Lippman
Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman
Ian S. Lustick
University of Pennsylvania
Rabbi Robert Marx
Newton & Jo Minow
Nell Minow
Martha L. Minow
Mary Minow
Franco Modigliani
Nobel Laureate (Economics)
Arthur Obermayer
Founding President, Meretz-USA
Grace Paley
Eli Pariser
MoveOn.org
Shana Penn
Rabbi Barbara Rosman Penzner
Marge Piercy
Judith Plaskow
Letty Cottin Pogrebin
Katha Pollitt
The Nation
Hilary Putnam
Harvard University (Emeritus)
Ruth Anna Putnam
Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben
Lilly Rivlin
Jerome S. Segal
Jewish Peace Lobby
Rabbi Amy Small
President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Art Spiegelman
Donna Spiegelman
Rabbi Toba Spitzer
Gloria Steinem
Rabbi Alana Suskin
Meredith Tax
Women's World
Rabbi David A. Teutsch
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky
Ayelet Waldman
Michael Walzer
Princeton University
Rabbi Arthur Waskow
Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf
Judy B. Wortman
Executive Vice President, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Rabbi Shawn Israel Zevit

Affiliations are for identification purposes only.

FOR THE SAKE OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY, BRING THE SETTLERS HOME.

FOR THE SAKE OF ISRAEL'S ECONOMY, BRING THE SETTLERS HOME.

PROVIDING SUITABLE COMPENSATION OPENS UP THE POSSIBILITY FOR MANY SETTLERS TO VOLUNTARILY RETURN TO ISRAEL PROPER.

One year after the 1956 Sinai Campaign, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion explained to IDF officers the reasons for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Nearly fifty years later, his speech serves as both warning and grim prophecy.

[I]t was clear that our remaining in Gaza, while the entire world ostracized us would lead to ... finding ourselves in a hostile sea of terrorism. Our military authorities would have had to shoot terrorists on a daily basis ... For the State of Israel, such a reality would have become a catastrophe ... Possibly, this would have destroyed us, not militarily, but morally - and in my opinion our morality underpins our very existence.

David Ben-Gurion, Yihud ve-Yi'ud (Tel Aviv) 1971 p. 294

You can help to bring the settlers home to Israel.
You can help move Israel one step closer to peace.

Sign the Call and share it with others in your community. Go to http://bringthemhome.btvshalom.org/ or fill out the coupon below.

This ad is sponsored by Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace

__Yes, I want to add my name to the Call to Bring the Settlers Home __You may NOT use my name publicly.

Signature:_____ Printed Name:_____

Address:_____ Zip Code_____

Telephone: _____ Email Address_____

__I want to promote this Call with a contribution. Make checks payable to "Brit Tzedek v'Shalom".

Charge my ____Master Card ____Visa ____American Express a total of $_____

Card Number_____ Expiration Date_____

Name on Card_____

Credit card donations may be faxed to (773) 583-5772 or mail this coupon to:
Brit Tzedek v'Shalom/Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace
PO Box 180175, Chicago, IL 60618-0175

1-888-2-LILITH

Ever the scientific mystic, I wonder: was this some miraculous shamanic magic I'd stumbled into, or an arrogant doctor's mistaken diagnosis? There is mystery here, but one thing is clear: There was an emotional alchemy that my life was teaching me, again and again. The heart heals itself when it's open to pain. The lead of suffering transforms into the gold of spiritual power.

Since Esther's fall and its aftermath, I have tried to describe the alchemy I experienced.

Being with fear in a state of awareness which we don't avoid, cling to, try to fix, or even try to understand, but are simply present: this is the pre-condition that makes the alchemy of fear possible. This is a process without a goal in sight. You are not trying to fix fear, make it go away, or to feel more "in charge," less vulnerable or helpless. You just watch and listen. This requires an intentional choice to regard fear as a kind of "meditation" and then to focus on it as clearly and openly as possible.

When we listen to fear, the appropriate action becomes clear. This is not always the action our rational minds would choose; it is the action that comes to us from the heart. When we are willing to accept the dark emotions rather than conquer them, we become warriors of vulnerability, and we learn the way of surrender.

When there seems to be no way out of a fearful situation, there is still an action that can work to alleviate fear: prayer. Sometimes prayer is the only action possible. We may not always get exactly what we pray for, but we discover that fear does not have to be a barrier to joy; it can be the gate that opens into it. Prayer comes to us instinctively, almost despite ourselves, when we are afraid. It is an ancient practice in the art of surrender.

Unlike the warrior's armoring and the victim's self-limiting reactions to fear, the way of surrender is about remaining vulnerable and finding the power of no protection.

"Get ahold of yourself." "Get a grip." "Stay in charge." These metaphors of management and control illustrate what we believe to be the "positive" way to deal with "negative" emotions. We must manage the feelings that otherwise would be destructive.

But emotional suffering is not necessarily a sign of mental disorder or illness. It's a universal fact of life. Steeped in the medical model of psychiatry, we have lost the sense of grief, fear and despair as universal experiences.

Our culture tells us, for example, that often fear is irrational and that we must let go of it to be happy. But the truth is that when we can attend to fear, it lets go of itself.

Surrendering to fear does not mean acquiescing to what scares us, giving in, becoming passive, or becoming cowardly. Surrender is the art of letting fear be. It all gets down to this: face into your fear and it lifts!

Esther seems to know this alchemy by heart. She is the teacher in this area, and I am the rather slow student. She is at risk for falling, breaking bones, dislocating knees. Her fear of falling is something she lives with, but she walks on. In fact, in her own unique way, she does more than walk: she dances, leg braces, back brace and all. Every day she's alive she finds something to be joyful about. Remembered joy is, in fact, one of her self-applied balms for fear. "That was a good day," she'll muse, when confined to her bed or the house because of yet another dislocated or fractured bone.

IF YOU'RE AFRAID OF ILLNESS, SERVE SOMEONE WHO'S ILL. IF YOU'RE AFRAID OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY, WORK FOR THE POOR. IF YOU'RE AFRAID OF DEATH, VOLUNTEER AT A HOSPICE.

And living with fear for Esther every day, I can find, at least on the good days, the secret she seems to know instinctively. Driving in the car, taking her to yet another physical therapist or doctor, we sing a song from a favorite tape. Eric Clapton's "If I Could Change the World." A little-known country music song, "Blame It On Your Lying Cheating Mean Mistreating Loving Heart." As we cruise down Route 128, the crazy traffic speeding around us, Esther and I are singing our hearts out. Joy! To be alive!

Joyful living is not the same thing as living without fear. It's about living fully with fear. Joy is what we find when we act with our fear for the sake of life. Mindful fear moves us to act with courage and lovingkindness, in the service of ourselves and others. And these acts of compassion and service are the quickest route to dispelling fear. If you're afraid of illness, serve someone who's ill. If you're afraid of disability, serve someone who's disabled. If you're afraid of not having enough money, work for the poor. If you're afraid of death, volunteer at a hospice. If you're afraid of loneliness, work with the elderly shut-ins in nursing homes. Then you will discover the alchemy of fear.

Facing into our worst fears—of death, loss, pain, vulnerability, isolation and chaos—takes as much courage as trekking in the wilderness in a snowstorm. The good news is that the more dreadful the fear, the greater the joy of facing into it. It turns out that our fears of death, vulnerability, pain and even helplessness are not intolerable. Finding the core of our fear, we find our way. Like the wilderness adventurer who makes it home through the storm, we are filled with joy. ■

MIRIAM GREENSPAN, a psychotherapist in Boston, is the author of *A New Approach to Women and Therapy*. This article is adapted from her new book, *Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear and Despair* (Shambhala, 2003).

Illustrations are from *From Let There Be Light: Poems and Prayers for Repairing the World* by JANE BRESKIN ZALBEN, copyright © 2002 by Jane Breskin Zalben. Used by permission of Dutton Children's Books, A Division of Penguin Young Readers Groups. A Member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc, 345 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014. All rights reserved.

Guiding Spirits

Since Eve, women have been spiritual seekers. Some are now pathfinders as well.

BY MALKA DRUCKER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAY BLOCK

The JewBu Bubbe

In the mid-1970s, **Sylvia Boorstein**, author of *That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist: On Being a Faithful Jew and Passionate Buddhist,* was a practicing psychotherapist, wife, and mother of four children. Her life was excellent, and yet she wasn't at peace. In fact, the more abundant her blessings, the more frightened she became that something, sooner or later, would happen to take them away. Her husband, Seymour, a psychiatrist, believed that spiritual paths should have answers to such dilemmas, and he became the family's "advance spiritual scout." After attending a two-week Buddhist meditation retreat, he suggested that Sylvia try it.

Her equanimity with two paths is rare, because most of us see identity in black-and-white terms: you are this or you are that, not both. Sylvia's work is of special interest to Jews because so many of us are practicing and teaching Buddhism. Unlike Sylvia, however, many of the teachers are born Jews but are otherwise Buddhist in belief and practice.

> "When we see clearly, we behave carefully. Nothing is wasted, not even wasting time!"

"I've done one particular exercise dozens of times where you write about the twelve stepping-stones of your life. Birth is number one; where you are now is number twelve. You're asked to consider the remaining ten steps in a contemplative way, and you don't plan it in advance. You sit down, write, 'I was born…' and then you number up to twelve. It's never been the same any time I've done it.

"I used to think that some things will change on the list, but I'll never leave out the death of my mother. It was a huge event when she died—I was twenty-three—and I'd worried about her weak heart since I was a child. Her illness shaped who I became, and her death is what confronted me about the frailty of life. But seven years after I 'knew' this, I did the list and my mother wasn't on it! Everything that we do matters, but sometimes we remember different events.

"When I see that everything we do has an effect, it makes me careful when I teach—not like tight, tense careful, but careful in the sense of impeccable. When we see clearly,

1-888-2-LILITH

we behave carefully. Nothing is wasted, not even wasting time! If I've wasted today, it doesn't need to upset me. I've learned that I won't do that tomorrow." Sylvia enjoys talking and teaching, leaning forward as a good teacher and therapist does.

"Intention is what corrects me. It's important to have a practice, it's important who taught you, but what is most important is intention. Why are you doing it? What do you hope will happen? My intention is to be alive and awake in my life so that I manifest myself as clearly as I can. It makes for a better life because it gives me the peace that is available to all human beings.

"On Shabbat...the women would mumble into their prayer books in Yiddish about the child who is creeping in and out too much. My grandmother would say, 'Leave her alone.' That's all that I remember. The rabbi gave frightening sermons on Yom Kippur about the Book of Life and the Book of Death, but I was never frightened because I was so well loved.

"This is 1940, and anti-Semitism was terrible. I wasn't well loved in school, I was the only Jew in my class, and kids said really terrible things to me. My mother worked hard to have me moved to another school. Even though I had to walk very far and couldn't go home for lunch, my mother's effort to keep me comfortable and my parents' kindness told me that it's all right to be alive. The sense of God I have is my mother. Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, 'I cannot see God's face, but I can see my mother's.'

"The God of my father's parents didn't work for him, and he didn't figure out how to get another one. But somehow, even though Judaism wasn't quite up to speed, my parents didn't get mad at it, and I love them for that."

Sylvia describes a "best day" scenario of practice: "I get up in the morning, say whatever I'm going to say, and I sit for maybe twenty minutes. Three times a week I drive to the minyan. I like being with the community because I like praying and also because I know they need me. We need ten people, and I count.

"My mother's father retired at sixty-five and came to live with us. He slept in my room. The phone would ring early in the morning, and I'd grope for the phone to hear somebody in Yiddish say, 'We need a tenth person for a minyan.' My grandfather wasn't religious and had long ago given up the practice, but they knew he wasn't working. He'd jump out of bed, get dressed, and run out the door. He didn't have a big consciousness about prayer, but he did have a big consciousness about showing up for people if they needed him.

"I have that consciousness. When my grandchildren were here for a couple of weeks, they went to camp. One morning I wasn't sure if the group would have a minyan, so I woke the children early, got everything packed for the day, and we went to *shul*. The youngest children asked why, and then the twelve-year-old grandson said, "Grandma, you're the tenth person here." That might have been the most important thing that happened while they were here. I told them about my grandfather, and that they can pass it down to their children. Now they have a five-generation story about showing up when people are needed."

Singing people through the narrows, like Miriam

Musician, songwriter and performer **Debbie Friedman**'s music has become part of the canon in a tradition that takes music seriously. Her music teaches the Hebrew alphabet, introduces overlooked women in the Bible, and gives fresh meaning to old holidays.

"The level of women's sensitivity and the way we relate to each other has affected the world. For example, people in the Reform movement didn't talk about feelings. It wasn't part of the vocabulary, and my music was about feelings, because women are about feelings. In that way, I've helped pave the way a little for women in Judaism.

"My hope is not just for women," Debbie says. "It's across the board. I want men to develop the feminine in themselves and to move out of imprisonment. I want women to do this, too, and women have a special role at this time. Some are putting themselves on the line."

> "People in the Reform movement didn't talk about feelings... and my music was about feelings."

Debbie says, "If we sang our liturgy during our daily lives, we wouldn't need to go to a synagogue to find God's love. Singing prayer would be such a natural part of our existence that we would live it all the time. Prayer would help our pain and increase our joy. What happens when we sing is that it touches every cell in our bodies, and every cell vibrates when we sing. We open ourselves to let the air in and out.

"I bring my whole life experience to my work, including growing up in Utica [New York] with my father, the butcher, my mother, and siblings. I remember the big, long table on Shabbos and the wine all around the table. Bubbe cooking upstairs and we're cooking downstairs; I remember the smells. My father couldn't stand his mother because he was a misogynist, and because of this he was intolerable. My two sisters and I became invisible with his voice and the violence of his hands. I don't want to embarrass anyone, but my father's abuse and the alienation and isolation of having lived in that situation has influenced me. It's made me want to go into communities and make things better. For a little while, I can make a home with those people. We can sing peacefully and make beautiful sounds together. There is no yelling and screaming, and I can be a part of that joy that was missing from my home."

"There's no reason why you couldn't have a Jewish ritual that involved dancing naked around the bonfire, but doing that as a Witch seemed natural."

While mainstream Jewish leadership in the late 1980s didn't think the AIDS epidemic had to do with their community, Debbie began her ministry of healing by creating a ritual for people with AIDS. What distinguishes her service is an authenticity that can come only from one who has asked to be healed herself. Besides the childhood she describes, she has other wounds to heal.

Fifteen years ago she took a medication that practically killed her. She says, "I can't run, but at least now I can walk. When I couldn't walk and when I couldn't run, when I couldn't get up from the table without spasms…those were the times when I felt totally helpless and hopeless. When I saw someone with cerebral palsy or heard of a child who had died, it freed me to talk about living and dying and illness. I believe that when we are aware of each others' fragility we have the capacity to lift one another from despair to places of hope.

"When I was in Tucson a few years ago for High Holidays, I needed both rabbis to help me up the steps. Afterwards, someone told me how important that was for the older members of the congregation to see. I could consider myself damaged because I needed help, but for somebody else, I was an example." Debbie says, "Even before I got sick, before the healing services, my work was the same. I've always wanted to bring people together, to feel closeness, and to create community. Each of us is hurting, and everyone knows that. Everyone wants to find a safe place. When we come together, we heal each other.

"The issue of healing is the bottom line of prayer, and the bottom line of being a Jew is to engage in *tikkun olam*, the healing of the world. You can't repair the world unless you repair yourself. It's not that you have to be totally intact, but you have to know how to look at yourself honestly and commit to your own healing."

How to be a Jewish Witch

"I'm a nice Jewish girl who grew up to be a Witch," says **Starhawk**, author of *The Spiral Dance* and other books. "My father was a Communist who died when I was five, and although my mother's real religion was psychology, she never lost her Jewish identity and her attachment to Judaism. We lived in Los Angeles, in an apartment upstairs from my Orthodox grandparents. I went to Hebrew High School and narrowly missed becoming a rabbi, but one day I realized that if I were a rabbi, I'd have to go to services all the time, and I always found it boring. The times when I felt that I was in the presence of the sacred has rarely been in the synagogue or studying holy books."

Starhawk explains, "I felt a lot more freedom in the Goddess tradition to be creative, to be spontaneous, and to create ritual. There's no reason why you couldn't have a Jewish ritual that involved dancing naked around the bonfire and plunging into the ocean, but doing that as a Witch seemed natural, and doing that as a Jew seemed strange….I had first met witches when I was at UCLA in 1968, when I did an anthropology project on witchcraft and was fascinated by the idea of the Goddess. It was tremendously empowering to think about divinity in female form and to think about a religion that said sexuality was sacred and nature was sacred. This fit the real experiences I've had in life...

"The Goddess religion provides another vision for religions like Judaism and Christianity. It shows that women can be spiritual leaders and religion can be built around female images of beauty. In the pagan world, women rested against rocks and let the sun warm and celebrate their vulvas. We're the radical edge. Women pushing for more of a role within their religions seem moderate by comparison. I don't think anyone in the Goddess movement would want to see everyone become a Witch. But I do think that understanding the earth is something sacred, and that the whole web of life is to be cherished, protected, and loved.

"I'm deeply Jewish at my core being, and it affects everything I do. What I took from my Jewish education is the sense of this world being the center of religion. It's about paying attention to what's going on around you in this life, not about the afterlife." This sounds like her current practice. "It's about the

1-888-2-LILITH

real relationships you have, being active in the world. Justice is core to religious being. For me, that's translated directly into my approach in Goddess religion. Unfortunately, social consciousness isn't as universal in Judaism as I once thought it was."

Cracking the stained-glass ceiling

Senior rabbi of Temple Emanuel, the Beverly Hills Reform congregation, the first woman rabbi to hold such a position in a major metropolitan city, Rabbi **Laura Geller** did not ascend to the position step by step, moving up the ladder from smaller congregations. In 1994, she shattered the "stained-glass ceiling"—the de facto barrier to a woman serving a congregation of more than a thousand—suddenly and surprisingly. After twenty years as rabbi of the University of Southern California Hillel, the Jewish college organization, and director of the Southwest American Jewish Congress, a civil rights group, Geller became rabbi of this prized pulpit.

"Issues of gender have been on the table from the minute I arrived. We have families from more traditional backgrounds than Reform, and some of them have resistance to women in religious leadership positions. Many people said that they were glad that I was here, they respected me, but personally they weren't comfortable with a woman rabbi.

"I was middle-aged when I came to Temple Emanuel, thank God. I came with a strong sense of who I was; I am exactly the same person I was before I took this position. So, at this stage of my life, I hear criticism differently from the way a newly ordained twenty-six-year-old might. When people say that they don't believe in women rabbis, I understand that they're telling me something about themselves, not me. I don't fret, I don't have low self-esteem, but I think if I'd taken this job right out of school, it would have killed me.

"Not everyone likes everything, but everybody knows that they can come and talk to me. After my first High Holidays here, I told the head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations that I was sending out a survey to see what people thought of the holidays. The response was, 'Are you crazy? You don't want that feedback.' We did it anyway and got a stunning percentage of respondents; and every year now we send out a High Holiday survey. It's about continuing to grow and get better. The message is, 'I care what you think.' This has to do with gender. I don't think people necessarily talk to their male rabbis the way they talk to me; they are comfortable criticizing me, and I find that to be an advantage. I'm thick-skinned, and I don't personalize what I'm hearing. That gives people a sense of involvement and safety with their feelings.

"Issues of gender have been on the table from the minute I arrived."

"When I took this job, it was a news story, because until I took this position, no woman had broken the stained-glass ceiling. But the real news story was you can get to be the senior rabbi of Temple Emanuel by starting as a Hillel director. The real story is if you follow your dreams, if you do what makes you happy, you're going to end up in surprising places." ■

Excerpted from *White Fire: A Portrait of Women Spiritual Leaders in America* ©2003 by Malka Drucker (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing). $24.95+$3.75 s/h. Order by mail or call 800-962-4544 or online at www.skylightpaths.com. Permission granted by Skylight Paths Publishing, PO Box 237, Woodstock VT 05091.

off our backs

The radical voice of women since 1970!

Only $25 subscription

Controversial ■ ■ Cutting-edge

Woman-centered ■ ■ Subversive

Radical ■ ■ Visionary

Activist ■ ■ Irreverent

Subscribe at www.offourbacks.org

or call 202-234-8072

Jewish Women, Many Voices

Between Two Deserts, by Germaine W. Shames, MacAdam/Cage, $24

Call Me Magdalena, by Alicia Steimberg, translated by Andrea G. Labinger, University of Nebraska Press, $16.95

Days of Awe, by Achy Obejas, Ballantiné Books, $24.95

Harem, by Dora Levy Mossanen, Scribner, $14

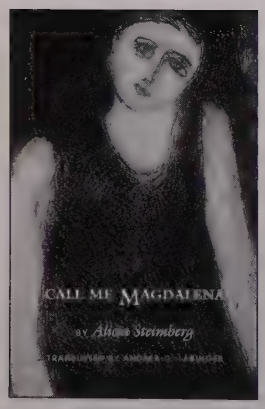
Song of Ascent, by Gabriella Goliger, Raincoast Books, $14.95

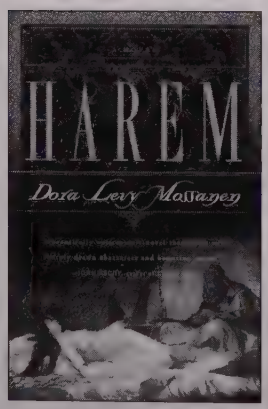
The Walled City, by Esther David, Syracuse University Press, $19.95

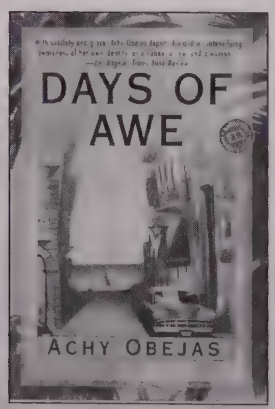
Exotic, yet somehow familiar—Jewish and female in disparate cultures

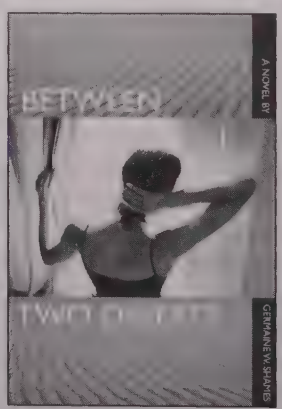
In a spate of recent novels, Jewish women-writing from all around the Diaspora present points of view their North American Jewish sisters will find exotic, yet familiar.

In *The Walled City,* Esther David writes about her own tight-knit Bene Israel community in India. Her heroine's family name, Dandekar, recalls tales of ancestors shipwrecked on the Konkan coast, "reciting the Hebrew prayers silently…wearing Indian clothes, speaking the local language and taking a new name, the name of the surrogate village that had adopted them." The story that Esther David tells, about this 2000-year-old community's struggle to preserve its identity as Jews even as the young people leave for Israel and other parts, is full of loving detail. We see the long, black, heavily oiled hair of the women, and the red kumkum dot some wear on their foreheads.









The question of Jewish female identity on the Asian continent also arises in *Harem*. This first novel by Dora Levy Mossanen, an Iranian Jew, is a frank pot-boiler of a story about three generations of Jewish women in ancient Persia who get ahead the only way they can—with their bodies.

On the other side of the world is Buenos Aires, a city with the largest Jewish community in Latin America, where just about everybody undergoes psychoanalysis. It's the setting for Alicia Steimberg's strange and compelling *Call Me Magdalena,* a look inside the psyche of an Argentine-Jewish woman, Magdalena, who sometimes changes her name to Flora, or Lili Marlene. The narrator jumps back and forth between poetry and prose to tell Magdalena's story about the conflicts inherent in being a Jew in Argentina, where "there's a rule of etiquette that one doesn't mention one's religion or national origin."

A different Jewish-Latina lens on identity is Achy Obejas' *Days of Awe*. In the context of Castro's revolution, this story explores the Jewish exile, here with a Cuban twist. Ale's Jewish family flees to America from Cuba after the Bay of Pigs crisis in 1961, and she wrestles with all of her identities—sexual, religious, national. She describes secretly watching her father, the descendant of *anusim*—Jews who were forced to convert under the Inquisition—putting on *t'fillin* and reciting Hebrew prayers in his Chicago basement. Her mother, also from *anusim* stock, had Ale baptized (the custom for these Spanish Jews), and prays to statues of saints. When Ale's father is asked if he is Jewish, he answers: "All Spanish people have Jewish blood in their veins."

Canadian writer Gabriella Goliger also plays the sad notes of the exile theme in the dark, sometimes intertwined short stories of *Song of Ascent*. "One Morning in Prague" has Franz Kafka springing out of his grave to take the guided tour of Prague's Jewish cemetery. In "Maedele," Rachel, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, has an affair with her McGill professor of Yiddish literature, also a camp survivor.

Our Diaspora journey ends in Israel. Germaine W. Shames' *Between Two Deserts*, about a part-Jewish American woman living in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's Old City, shows politics and personal life intertwining in a place where ancient conflicts stir up deadly

violence. Eve, the beautiful protagonist with the biblical name, has a Palestinian lover as well as the legacy of her adored Jewish grandfather. The men she meets are always falling in love with her. Besides Salim, there's a Hungarian Holocaust survivor who yearns for her, seeing in her the wife the Nazis murdered, and an Israeli father and son who both want her. It's as if the author were saying that Jewish women rule all these disparate parts of the universe.

—ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

A Starving Madness, by Judith Rusky Rabinor, Gurze Books, $14.95

What makes this book about eating disorders fascinating and different is Rabinor's chronicle of how, when a therapist enters the dynamic with the patient, both lives become enriched.

Creating an empathetic relationship with people isolated by eating disorders, Rabinor writes of helping them "unravel the threads of their unfulfilled hungers that have become twisted into an obsession with food and weight." The simple belief "I feel fat" stands for complex roots; the stories told here, of seven women and one man, explore causes from parents' divorce to childhood abuse. Patients range from a bulimic teenager seeking to blot out her inner pain by burning herself to a woman who first sought therapy at age 65 because of unresolved lifelong conflicts with her 90-year-old mother.

Rabinor, director and founder of an eating disorders center on Long Island and professor of psychology at Adelphi University, maintains that anorexic patients may project their own compulsions onto their children, thus catapulting the problems into the next generation. One 31-year-old mother, who at 5'6" weighed only 95 pounds, was already fixated on her two-year-old's weight: "I'm worried about Ashley. She's getting so flabby." For another patient, who grew up taunted by her glamorous mother for being heavy, therapy was "a big, fat failure, just like me." Eventually, by recognizing her pain caused by her emotionally absent mother, she was able to have a child without being terrified of gaining weight.

A college student had been anorexic since the age of 10, coinciding with the time her 16-year-old brother started sneaking into her bedroom. His abuse lasted years, but it took therapy for the patient to see its connection to her illness. Eventually her brother entered therapy too. Similarly, a 15-year-old girl suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder, which is often paired with anorexia, resisted the realization that the onset of her illnesses coincided with her father's remarriage.

One teenager was able to recapture her lost self through journal writing. Rabinor comments: "If symptoms are a way of forgetting, healing is based on remembering and talking. Freud taught us that. And Becky taught me that talk therapy is not simply about speaking, and journal writing is not just about writing. Therapy is about being listened to by someone who nourishes and nurtures the soul. Writing offers another kind of healing experience—a sustained self-listening."

Yet Rabinor candidly admits that not all patients are cured: "We tend to expect people's stories to resolve neatly. Real lives aren't like that...not every story ends so happily."

But with its message that caring hastens cure, this book might well be a primer for therapists in general.

—HELEN SCHARY MOTRO

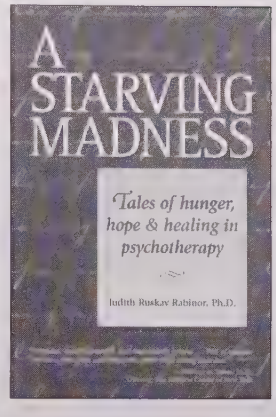
Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism, by Karla Goldman, Harvard University Press, $18

Most Jewish women in the United States have come a long way from the screened-off balconies that were standard features of traditional synagogues.

Chronicling the growing participation of women in American synagogue life from Colonial times through the turn of the twentieth century, Goldman traces the evolution of more "open" women's galleries, "family" pews, mixed gender choirs, synagogue sisterhoods, women's admittance to congregational membership and boards, and their synagogue-related charitable activities.

Each of these steps along the road to more nearly equal gender roles in Judaism was controversial. Those proposing mixed seating and choirs were eager to demonstrate their commitment to women's rights, openness to secular culture and concern with "decorum," a style of worship more in keeping with that of their Protestant neighbors.

On the other hand, traditionalists, while appreciating women's contributions to Jewish religious life, argued that such innovations were against Jewish law or threatened traditional Judaism. Then, as now, women's issues



One mother, weighing 95 pounds, was already fixated on her two-year-old. "I'm worried. She's getting so flabby."

Why Gratz?

"Gratz gives students the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with faculty and administrators. The courses are timely, relevant and personally enriching."

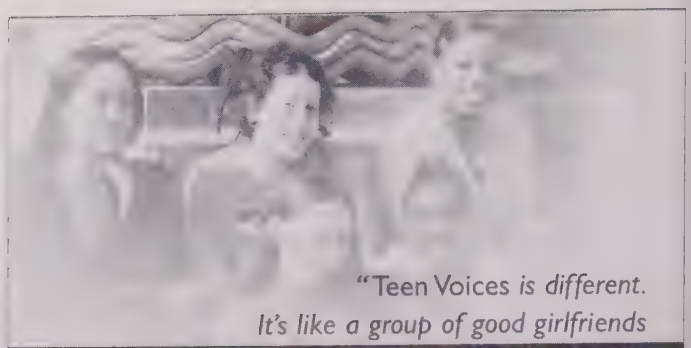
Michelle Ellis-Malet,
MSW/MAJCS '99
Director of Development
Gesher Jewish Day School
Of Northern Virginia

Graduate, Undergraduate & Certificate Programs in
Jewish Education . Jewish Music
Jewish Communal Service . Jewish Studies

Gratz COLLEGE

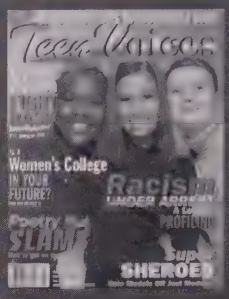
7605 Old York Road, Melrose Park, PA 19027
215-635-7300 ext. 140 ~ 800-475-4635 ext. 140
E-mail: admissions@gratz.edu
Visit our website at www.gratzcollege.edu

A constituent of Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia



"Teen Voices is different. It's like a group of good girlfriends bringing you support, fun, humor, and advice on problems of growing up to be oneself"

Gloria Steinem



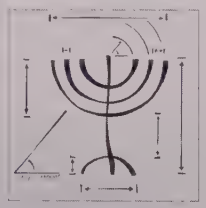
NOTICED THAT TEEN MAGAZINES DON'T HAVE MUCH TO SAY?

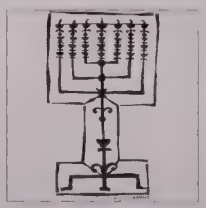
THERE'S AN ALTERNATIVE!

Written by and for teen women with more on their minds than fashion and celebrity gossip, *Teen Voices* has been promoting social change and a healthier self-image for over ten years.

Subscribe today at www.teenvoices.com or call 888.882.TEEN.

BIBLICAL CIVILIZATION


RABBINIC CIVILIZATION


MEDIEVAL CIVILIZATION

MODERN CIVILIZATION

CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION

Teaching Judaism as an Evolving Religious Civilization: Learn More at Our Virtual Open House

THINKING ABOUT RABBINICAL SCHOOL? WONDERING IF RRC IS RIGHT FOR YOU? Attend one of our "virtual open houses" for a quick tour of the campus, and chat online with students and faculty at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. All you need is a computer with internet access to get the answers to your questions and a feel for RRC's warm, welcoming community.

SIGN UP TODAY. LOG ON TO WWW.RRC.EDU TO PRE-REGISTER FOR ONE OF THE VIRTUAL OPEN Houses we will be holding this spring and learn more about RRC's unique approach to rabbinical training. To obtain a copy of the schedule of Virtual Open Houses, visit our website, contact the Dean of Admissions at 215-576-0800, ext. 145, or e-mail the College at admissions@rrc.edu.

RECONSTRUCTIONIST RABBINICAL COLLEGE
www.rrc.edu

often occupied center stage in deliberations over the future direction of American Judaism.

As the author makes clear, the campaign for greater women's equality in synagogue life was inextricably linked to Jews' struggle for acculturation and acceptance in the larger American society. In advocating such reforms as mixed seating, upwardly mobile Jews sought middle-class respectability in a country where women regularly attended church services. Echoing nineteenth century notions regarding women's domestic virtues and spiritual nature, rabbis encouraged women to both participate more actively in synagogue life and maintain traditional Jewish practices within the home.

Karla Goldman's insightful analysis is based on a wide variety of sources (including synagogue archival documents and the Anglo-Jewish press), and draws upon architectural and American church history in valuable ways. She explores many topics that have not been treated adequately elsewhere, such as the establishment of *mikvaot* [ritual baths] in early American Jewish communities. A concise epilogue sets more recent feminist accomplishments, such as women's access to the study of traditional texts and the ordination of women rabbis, within their historical context.

—REENA SIGMAN FRIEDMAN

The New Anti-Semitism: The Current Crisis and What We Must Do About It, by Phyllis Chesler, Jossey-Bass, $24.95

That the 21st century has brought increased disdain for things Jewish is a disturbing fact, and Chesler's latest book systematically catalogs a nauseating array of hate crimes throughout the world. Chesler presents concrete evidence, from cemetery desecrations to attacks on synagogues, from the outright murder of individual Jews to Holocaust deniers who believe the Shoah deserves neither recognition nor mourning. Not surprisingly, she finds law enforcement to be erratic. At best, Chesler reports, a few offenders are singled out for penalty.

Unfortunately, these realities are frighteningly familiar, and had Chesler, who has written about feminist issues for more than two decades, simply reminded us of them, there would be little of newsworthy value in her latest text. Instead, she treads new ground and looks at the ways feminist and progressive movements have treated Jews and Jewish concerns, especially Israel.

Chesler is up front about her love of Eretz Yisrael. Although she maintains her right to be critical of Israeli politics—among other things, she is a fervent supporter of the Women of the Wall—she argues that it is blatant anti-Semitism to equate Zionism with racism and to deny that Jews have a right to a country of their own, situated in the Middle East. What's more, she views the Left's fixation on Palestinian concerns as a repudiation of Jewish suffering.

But Israel's policies in Palestinian areas have grabbed world headlines, and as deaths have mounted, both Jews and non-Jews have denounced both forced evictions and displacement. Are some critics anti-Semitic? Undoubtedly. But that does not necessarily obviate their concern.

Or does it? Chesler implies that Israel has as much right to be repressive as other nations and argues that holding it to a higher standard is anti-Semitic. I think she's wrong. Regardless, this perturbing but provocative book is guaranteed to get your juices flowing and is a must-read for those concerned with morality and ethics.

—ELEANOR J. BADER

Single Wife, by Nina Solomon, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, $23.95

Grace Brookman is in trouble. Her husband, Laz, has disappeared. This behavior is not without precedent; there have been other times that Laz has vanished. But never for this long. Instead of confiding her problem—in friends, in family—Grace goes through the elaborate charade of pretending Laz is still there. She leaves clues for the housekeeper, and invents excuses for her mother-in-law and her own parents, who openly adore her husband.

As fall turns to winter in New York City, Grace's deceptions—putting socks and underwear in the laundry, leaving the toilet seat up—grow larger and more complex. Laz's absence and the trail of clues she manufactures to conceal it become a kind of alternate life, a metaphor for the man she wishes Laz were, but comes to see is not. Slowly, insidiously, revelations about his past—a son who emerges from the shadows, a scandal in his professional life—suggest that the husband Grace has and the husband she invents are not the same.

Solomon limns Grace's despair and her understated courage with a wry, deft touch. Most touching is Grace's relationship with her

In a new novel, a woman pretends to the world that her husband is still around—"putting his socks in the laundry, leaving the toilet seat up."

parents, Milton and Paulette, and their best friends, the Sugarmans. This familiar Jewish clan is anxious yet caring, invasive yet self-deluded. Milton and Paulette's obsession with the weather (the number for the National Weather Service is on their speed-dial); Francine Sugarman's embossed plastic containers filled with the food that she lovingly prepares and freezes—these are the specifically rendered details that make what might be otherwise generic types ring utterly clear and true.

When Grace's father has a heart attack, she is finally moved to reveal her real predicament to her parents.

Her father begins to sob, covering his face with his hands. "What, Dad?" Grace asks, moving closer to him and putting her arm around his shoulder.

"I can't help you," he says, through his tears. For a Jewish father of an only daughter, there can be no more painful admission. ■

–YONA ZELDIS MCDONOUGH

Finding God in the Garden: Backyard Reflections on Life, Love, and Compost by Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Little Brown & Co., $24.95

For Balfour Brickner, gardening is a serious avocation. His gardening provides the metaphoric trelliswork on which to develop his convictions on philosophical and social issues. Particularly in the garden, he "finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones." He credits his busy mother, Rebecca, with inspiring his love of gardens, noting that in Cleveland "friends and colleagues would joke that they could sell 'Rebecca dolls'; 'Wind one up and it will start an organization.'"

Eden, the first garden, prompts Brickner to a discussion of the well-worn question of free will versus predestination: choice is available, and choice matters. "What we do makes the difference between whether God is expressed or denied in the world." Brickner emphasizes that the actual text of the Eden story does not, as some later commentators do, link sex and sin. He deplores this "harmful equation" that persists in education and social policy in relation to both heterosexuality and homosexuality.

The author's gardening experiences in planting, weeding, composting and losing precious plants suggest analogies to love, sexuality, euthanasia, bereavement, cross pollination of group Torah study, the dignity of labor, the blessing of Sabbath, and the relationship between science and religion.

Consistently and knowledgeably Rabbi Brickner offers the Jewish perspective on *tikkun olam*—repair of the world—in which his garden work instructs him.

—LILLIAN STEINFELD

A Jew in America: My Life and a People's Struggle for Identity, by Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, HarperSanFrancisco, $29.95

Arthur Hertzberg's memories are a fascinating read. During his 80 years in America he grows from a very poor son of immigrants in Baltimore to become a Conservative rabbi, a teacher and lecturer, a fighter for decency and for Israel. We meet people we've all heard of, seen through his eyes. And we go with him on his travels to Israel, beginning at the birth of the Jewish State.

Two wise male rabbis look back...

It is quite extraordinary that this man, born to a Hassidic family, deeply affected by the Holocaust and the loss of so many members of his own family, would become so liberal in his religious views. Hertzberg's liberalism was demonstrated early in his career as rabbi in Memphis, Tennessee where he fought for the rights of African Americans in a difficult era. Before it was common practice, this influential rabbi was a champion of women's rights in Judaism. He did not hesitate to ask women to join a minyan when he was obliged to say prayers for his departed parents, and from the beginning he not only urged all women to study, but taught his own daughters.

EDGAR M. BRONFMAN

Our Reviewers

ELEANOR J. BADER is the co-author of *Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism* and a contributor to In These Times, The Progressive, The New York Law Journal and Z Magazine.

EDGAR M. BRONFMAN is President of the World Jewish Congress and Chair of the Board of Governors of Hillel.

HELEN SCHARY MOTRO, an American lawyer and writer living in Israel, is a columnist for the Jerusalem Post.

LILLIAN STEINFELD is a copy editor who finds inspiration at the family tree farm in the Catskill Mountains.

REENA SIGMAN FRIEDMAN is Associate Professor of Modern Jewish History at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and is a Contributing Editor of LILITH.

Summer Reading

SAN REMO DRIVE Cloth • $26
A Novel From Memory
Leslie Epstein
"A work of high order, which dignifies life."
—HA JIN

SHATTERED DREAMS Cloth • $28
The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995-2002
Charles Enderlin, Translated by Susan Fairfield
"A compelling read, providing an in-depth record of a troubled peace process that has still not come to fruition."
—SHIMON PERES, former Prime Minister of Israel

BREAKING RANKS Cloth • $25
Refusing to Serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
Ronit Chacham
In a series of moving and provocative statements, nine members of the Israeli Defense Force tell why they refused to serve in the West Bank and Gaza.

OTHER PRESS
At fine bookstores, or contact us:
(212) 414-0054 • www.otherpress.com

דרישה
Drisha Institute
TEXT STUDY FOR WOMEN
Full-Time Programs
Continuing Education
Scholars Circle
Winter Week of Learning
Co-ed Community Lectures
Summer Institutes
Summer High School Program

SUMMER PROGRAMS
JUNE 9-27
JUNE 30-AUGUST 1

Talmud • Hebrew
Liturgy • Jewish Law
Bible • Philosophy

for information or free catalogue:
Drisha Institute for Jewish Education
131 West 86th Street
New York, NY 10024
(212) 595-0307 ☎ inquiry@drisha.org
www.drisha.org

PREPARE TODAY TO LEAD THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF TOMORROW

EARN UP TO 9 CREDITS IN 3 WEEKS!
INTENSIVE SUMMER SESSION
JUNE 23-27 • JULY 7-11 • JULY 14-18

- BA, MA, Ph.D. in Jewish Studies
- MA in Jewish Education (MAJE)
  - *-Administrative Track*
  - *-Teaching Track*
  - *-Dual Degree Option for State Certification with Goucher College*
- MA in Jewish Communal Service (MAJCS)
- Dual Degree programs with The University of Maryland, The Johns Hopkins University and Loyola College
  in cooperation with The Darrell D. Friedman Institute

Contact: Essie Keyser at 888-248-7420 or 410-578-6967
or e-mail ekeyser@bhu.edu. Visit BHU online at www.bhu.edu

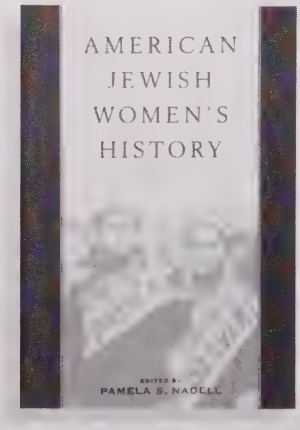
THE ASSOCIATED
JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION OF BALTIMORE

BHU is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the Ministry of Education of the State of Israel.

BALTIMORE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

NYU PRESS

AMERICAN WOMEN, JEWISH WOMEN



American Jewish Women's History
A Reader
Edited by Pamela S. Nadell
360 pages, $24.00

"An impressive compendium of essays, **American Jewish Women's History** paints a broad and diverse portrait of American Jewish women. Written by some of the most incisive historians of the American Jewish community, the chapters examine Jewish women in many different venues: the home and the marketplace, religious and secular institutions, and picket lines and cultural institutions."
–Deborah E. Lipstadt, Emory University

Ranging from colonial times to the present, this anthology of eighteen essays illuminates the historical diversity of the experiences of Jewish women in America.

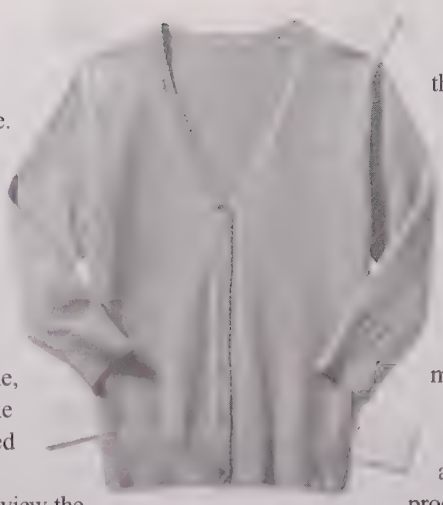
www.nyupress.org 1-800-996-NYUP

continued from page 48

backpack, but didn't know that it was me. Their rabbi. I wonder whether I would know to look for a 26-year-old girl in a maroon sweater-set, either.

"What should I call you? Ms. Pelc?"

I think this is the worst of the options I have heard so far. He does not want to offend me, but the fact remains that he does not know what to call me, either. I try to pretend that I am just like any other guest rabbi who has visited Lubbock, Texas.



"Do I look more like a rabbi if I wear a robe?" I ask the choir director.

At the hotel, I unpack my bags and review the clothes that I have brought along for the weekend. I know that I will need something dressy for Friday night services, and that Saturday and Sunday will be a bit less formal. What does a young woman rabbi wear? A suit? A dress? I had decided against suits, since they felt too formal and too male. I brought a flowered dress falling between knee and ankle for Friday night. Conservative, sophisticated, simple. Perfect for Lubbock, Texas. I have not worn it since I purchased it three years ago. I look at myself in the mirror. I feel like a little girl. I change clothes three times before I am content to leave the room. I sit in the lobby, lean over, and realize that it is possible to see more leg than I had anticipated in that flowered dress. I long for jeans and comfortable shoes, for my seat in the back of the congregation where I can whisper with my friends and critique the rabbi from below.

I am picked up from my hotel by the synagogue's ex-president and his wife. I reach for the handle of the rear door, but I see that his wife is seated in the back seat. I am reminded that I am here for work. A guest rabbi would sit in the front seat of the car, even when a husband and wife are both present in the vehicle. I tell myself that I am a hired professional, not someone's daughter or niece or out-of-town cousin.

When we arrive at the temple, people want to shake hands and say howdy to the new rabbi. Everyone asks me what I would like them to call me. What is it preventing me from making eye contact and, smiling with confidence, saying "Call me Rabbi"? I am unsure whether I want to be their adorable granddaughter or their professional, competent spiritual leader.

I am told that all of the members of the temple's entirely non-Jewish choir wear long white robes. I see the robes hanging one after the other on a coat rack in the office, and wonder aloud whether I, too, should wear one.

"Naw, you're dressed up so pretty," the choir director, Christina, tells me, as I try one on over my flowered dress.

"But do I look more like a rabbi in the robe?" I ask her, as I push the long sleeves up so I can use my hands.

"You do what you want, but I think you don't need it" she tells me. I imagine wrapping a big white prayer shawl over the robe and drowning in white fabric. I decide to leave the robe on its hanger.

As the choir and I ascend the steps to the raised platform of the bimah, I see rows of blank faces looking up at me, the curiosity. Standing before them, my nervousness and my self-consciousness fade. I have waited my whole life for this moment. To stand before a congregation and sing my soul, to connect with the ancient words of our tradition and to reach out to the people who have come to share this sacred moment with me.

I hold the kiddush cup and bless the sweet Sabbath wine. I carry the heavy Torah around the sanctuary as the choir sings and I proclaim *"Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad."* Listen, Israel. The Lord is Our God, the Lord is One. I chant from the Torah and teach the congregation about Noah. As I call out the names of our ancestors in the central prayer, the *Tefilah*, I add the names of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah—the matriarchs—and I smile.

At the end of the service, we gather in the social hall to share homemade desserts and coffee.

"Thank you for coming, Rabbi, Sir" one elderly man tells me, before changing the epithet to "Ma'am, er, Miss."

Some people tell me that they loved the sermon. One congregant tells me that it was "very accessible for the children."

The children ask me if I am married, if I am a vegetarian, and which is my favorite portion of the Torah. They call me "The Rabbi"—talking about me in the third person to their parents, even though I am in the room. I wonder if they sense that this is what I really do want.

"The Rabbi taught us the Bathroom Prayer," one of them announces, after I explain that tradition provides an opportunity to praise God even after using the facilities.

"The Rabbi said that it's okay to give her a hug," another exclaims.

"The Rabbi is coming into our Sunday School classes!" I nod, letting them know that I will be here, for them, as The Rabbi, all weekend.

For the children, I tell myself, it is important for me to be The Rabbi. Not student rabbi. Not Ms. Pelc. But Rabbi.

A woman slowly approaches me after most of the others have left the temple. Her eyes are swollen, she asks whether I do spiritual counseling. She is crying.

"My dad died two weeks ago. I can't work, I can't sleep. There was no formal mourning. He was cremated." I notice that she is the same age as my mother. She calls me Rabbi. I tell her yes. I would be glad to meet with her, to listen, to allow space for her tears. We agree to meet after Sunday school. I look at her looking at me. I am a 26-year-old child—and I am her rabbi.

For the first time all weekend, I know who I am. ■

JULIE PELC is studying to be a rabbi at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. She is co-editor, with Tobin Belzer, of the forthcoming anthology *Joining the Sisterhood: Young Jewish Women Write Their Lives* (SUNY Press).

CLASSIFIED

Widow in W. Palm Beach would like to share her beautiful condo with another widow for companionship, someone who would drive her to the supermarket/doctor in exchange for free rent. For further information email John: **jk@econhist.de**

We sing, write prayers, search ancient texts for Shekhina…

CREATIVE WRITING SERVICES

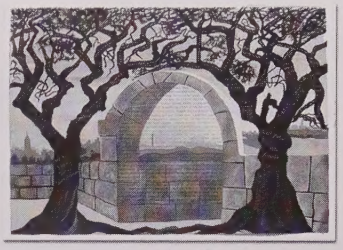
Nancy Shiffrin PhD author/editor/teacher helps aspiring writers achieve publication/satisfaction
individualized instruction reasonable rates
The Holy Letters (poems)
My Jewish Name (essays)
http://home.earthlink.net/~nshiffrin
nshiffrin@earthlink.net
POB 1506 Santa Monica CA 90406

Limited Edition Custom Ketubahs

ArtKetubah.com

Contemporary & Traditional Texts and Designs

"Gift of Love", 2003



"Growing Together", 2003

- Custom texts
- Interfaith
- Anniversary
- Brit Ahuvim
- Same-Sex

Save $25 on your order ~ coupon #LIM43 ~ (until 8/31/03)

www.artketubah.com (310) 664-0677

Tallit Handmade

Handcrafted Iridescent Silk Tallitot and Chuppa

Each tallit is custom made

Every tallit is one of a kind

www.tallithandmade.com
michael@tallithandmade.com
310.737-1998

"I will greatly bless you and make your descendants numerous as the stars in the heavens..."

Envelop yourself in the "Star Legacy" today

This eternal promise made to Abraham and Sarah by God has now found exquisite expression in an exciting, limited-edition new collection of tallitot, kippot, and bags: The "Star Legacy" collection from Harwin Studios.

Harwin Studios/Dept. B
9101 SW 15th Ave.
Portland, OR 97219
503/245-8900
fax 503/246-7479
www.harwinstudios.com
info@harwinstudios.com

Are you an artist, craftsperson, bookseller trying to reach Jewish women?

Let us help you get your message out!

For rate information call Leslie Hollis Margulies (212) 757-0818
or e-mail: lilithmag@aol.com

RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE

The Awareness Center addresses sexual abuse in Jewish communities around the world. It provides the Jewish community, rabbis and other authority figures, and the news media with information relating to sexual abuse, offenders, healing and treatment issues. They also have created an online Jewish survivors group. *www.TheAwarenessCenter.org*

Violence against women is a form of social control which has wide-ranging effects on women's poverty. The Trapped by Poverty/Trapped by Abuse research conference —October 17-19, 2003 in Austin, Texas—will bring together researchers, policy makers, service providers, advocates, and elected officials. Organizers are taking nominations for the first Sheila and Paul Wellstone Award for Advocacy in Work, Welfare, and Domestic Violence, to be presented at the conference. *www.ssw.umich.edu/trapped/nominations.html*

Violence against women and human rights activists—an essay contest. Practitioners and scholars are invited to submit essays up to 1200 words for Human Rights Dialogue's fall 2003 issue. Essays should explore the effectiveness of the human rights framework in defining and eradicating violence against women. Guidelines ask provocative questions, such as "Does your organization find it preferable to connect violence against women to issues of children, family or motherhood?" Submissions should be in an engaging, informal, and testimonial style. Inquiries to: *Erin Mahoney, (212)838-4120; emahoney@cceia.org. www.cceia.org*

IS THIS YOUR STORY?

Children of non-Holocaust-survivor Jewish parents are needed for a study analyzing their responses compared to those of children of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Respondents should have at least one European Jewish ancestor: mother, father, grandparent, great-grandparent. If you are willing to complete a questionnaire, contact *Roni Woolrich (516)877-3999 x750021; Roniwool@aol.com*

"The potent cocktail of ritual, acne, insecurity and hormones" that was the bar/bat mitzvah experience for many Jewish adolescents from the 1960s to the early '90s is the subject of a website (and eventually a book) created by Nick Kroll, Jules Shell and Roger Bennett. Send stories, archival photos, T-shirts, centerpieces, "themes" and other memorabilia to *www.barmitzvahdisco.com*

Interfaith Families Essay Contest. Tell your personal story of involvement in Jewish life, what you do, what it means to you, what has helped you get involved and what obstacles you've overcome. First prize is $1000. E-mail your 500-800-word essays by June 20 to *contest@interfaithfamily.com. www.interfaithfamily.com*

Seeking relatives or lost friends Down Under. Browse Jewish Australia, peruse the notice board pages, and perhaps you can help to make it "a small world after all," suggests Aura Levin Lipski. *www.jewishaustralia.com*

HAPPENINGS

Anne Frank, the writer, an unfinished story. Original pages from Anne Frank's last diary notebook along with other writings and her photo album will be on display June 12 to September 12, 2003 at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. *www.ushmm.gov*

COURTESY ANNE FRANK STICHTING

Anne Frank, age 12, at her desk at the Montessori School in Amsterdam.

Kfar Jewish Arts Center. Hebrew for "village," Kfar bills itself as "the next generation of Jewish expression," bringing together a community of Jewish musicians, writers, performers, artists and audiences to celebrate contemporary Jewish culture. To receive a bimonthly e-mail of Jewish cultural events in Chicago, contact *Adam Davis, (773)550-1543; www.kfarcenter.com*

The Women Cantors' Network, organized in 1982, is a resource for working, aspiring, or retired women cantors. It provides professional, educational and practical support for women in—or interested in—the cantorate. An annual conference, this year held June 15-18, includes workshops on vocal health, children's choir music, choral singing and conducting, a cabaret featuring women cantors, and a marketplace selling music and Judaica provided by members. For membership or conference info: *(203)438-5609; www.womencantors.net.*

Transforming the Jewish World: a Feminist View, a conference sponsored by the Eleanor Leff Jewish Women's Research Center, National Council of Jewish Women New York Center—held Nov. 2 at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Manhattan—will celebrate the accomplishments of Jewish Feminism. Speakers include Blu Greenberg, Francine Klagsbrun, Elizabeth Swados, Alice Shalvi. Info from Annette Landau, *aland@ncjwny.org*

"The Postwoman," directed by Dina Zvi-Riklis, "All I've Got," directed by Karen Margalit, and "1000 Calories," directed by Dalia Mevorach are among the women-centered features, documentaries, student shorts and made-for-TV films playing at the 19th annual Israel Film Festival in New York June 19-July 3 and in Miami November 13-20. *(877)966-5566; www.israelfilmfestival.com; israfest@earthlink.net*

Film still from "All I've Got."

1-888-2-LILITH

Jewish mothers on display. The Jewish Museum of Maryland is planning an exhibition on Jewish mothers, tentatively set to open September 2005. If you have anecdotes, bibliography ideas, objects, photos, or thoughts on what should be included or emphasized, contact *research historian Deborah Weiner, Jewish Museum of Maryland, 15 Lloyd St., Baltimore, MD, 21202; dweiner@jewishmuseummd.org*

ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

Women in Daily Life, the first selective bibliography posted on the Center for Jewish History website, was created by partners AJHS (American Jewish Historical Society); ASF (American Sephardi Federation); LBI (Leo Baeck Institute); and YIVO (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research) and the Yeshiva University Museum (YUM) *www.cjh.org*

Scholar & Feminist Online, a biannual, multimedia, online-only journal of feminist theories and women's movements, provides public access to the Barnard Center for Research on Women's Programming, making available written transcripts, audio and visual recordings, and links to relevant intellectual and social action networks. A forum for scholars, activists, and artists, recent guest editors have included Marjorie Agosin (*Writing Towards Hope: Literature, Art, & the Struggle for Human Rights*) and Laura Levitt (*Changing Focus: Family Photography & American Jewish Identity*). *www.barnard.edu/sfonline*

Feeding an identity: gender food, and survival is the theme of an issue of Nashim guest-edited by Norma Baumel Joseph. Among the offerings: essays by Carol Meyers on "Bread Production and Female Power in Ancient Israelite Households," "Eating 'Out': Food and the Boundaries of Jewish Community and Home in Germany and the United States," and Paulette Kershenovich on the construction of identity through food in the Syrian Jewish community in Mexico. *Nashim@schechter.org.il hirijw@brandeis.edu*

ROE AT THIRTY

Being a clinic escort or sending postcards of appreciation are a few ways to to help stop the isolation and create a positive climate for abortion providers across the country. Remember and honor Dr. David Gunn the first provider murdered, and others who put their lives on the line daily to make choice possible. Without abortion providers, there can be no "choice." And without choice women cannot be free to live and plan their lives. *www.refuseandresist.org/ab/march10/2003/pdf/what-you-can-do.pdf*

Judicial appointments. Keep informed and participate in a campaign to communicate to your legislators your concern that they oppose the appointment of anti-choice judges. *www.prochoiceaction.org/campaign*

PIONEER WOMEN

The Plough Woman: Records of the Pioneer Women of Palestine. In the words of Rachel Kaznelson-Rubashov (Shazar), who wrote in the introduction in 1931, "This book is, in form and content, the mirror of a great episode in the history of Jewish womanhood. It is not a literary enterprise. It is a simple collection of human documents, a cooperative effort to record, in direct personal reports, the spirit and achievements of a generation of women." This extraordinary collection of poignant and courageous voices has been reissued in a critical annotated edition, prepared Mark Raider and Miriam Raider-Roth, from *Brandeis/New England Press.*

Living for Tomorrow: Untold Stories by the Pioneering Women of Israel is a documentary film based on a 1944 book, *Women of the Kibbutz,* published in what

was then Palestine. Made by the granddaughter of one of them, these women in their 80s and 90s tell about their personal experiences building the kibbutz, a utopia of collective ownership and shared decision-making which they hoped would become the spiritual kernel of the new Jewish nation. *Lilach Dekel, (917)576-7416; lilach@dekelmedia.com*

—*compiled by* NAOMI DANIS

FISCAL FEMINISM

Unjust Desserts: Financial Realities for Older Women. Women are more likely than men to leave a career to work in unpaid caregiving roles. Women earn significantly less than men leading to lower average retirement savings. Women live longer than men. Many pensions decrease in value or are eliminated entirely when a husband dies, and divorced women must have been married at least 10 years to be eligible for a former husband's social security benefits. For resources and ideas for women thinking about retirement as well as some things *society* can do, there's a free publication from The International Longevity Center-USA and the AARP available and downloadable *from (212)606-3383; www.ilcusa.org*

Why Does Home Care Matter to Women? Women provide more than 80% of paid home care and unpaid personal care for the elderly, and for those of all ages with long-term disability or short-term illness. Health care reform will affect the kind of care provided at home, the number of people in households available to give care, and the participation of most women in the paid labor force. A 16-page report can be downloaded or requested on paper from Canadian Women's Health Network. *www.cwhn.ca; news@cwhn.ca*

Rabbi Julie, Take One

BY JULIE PELC

"What should we call you?"

I tell them that my name is Julie, but they can call me whatever they want. Do they want to call me Rabbi Pelc? I certainly don't feel like Rabbi Pelc. Rabbi Pelc sounds like someone old, someone wise, someone male. I know that many of my colleagues would choose to be Rabbi Julie—a nice compromise. But this begs the question; if I were a man, even a male student, would I still be flinching when they called me Rabbi? Or would I smile, shyly, knowing that this title would be mine soon enough?

I tell myself that I am being reverential to the training of my chosen profession, since I will not rightfully deserve the distinction of being called Rabbi for three more years, when I am finished with my graduate studies. But I know that hidden inside this reverence and humility lurks a deep-seated fear of owning the power of the rabbinate, owning the power of my own authority.

On the airplane, high above Las Vegas, headed toward Lubbock, Texas, I try on my profession for size for the first time, just to see how it fits. I am practicing my Torah reading, matching the ancient words with their musical cantillation: reading, then singing quietly under my breath until I can chant the Hebrew without looking at the page. This week, the portion of the Torah we read includes the story of Noah. I glance over my sermon, describing God's plan to eradicate all of humanity because of the corruption and immortality that has permeated the land.

Seated in the aisle beside me, three attractive young men loudly discuss their weekend plans. The one seated closest to me is especially good looking, and I pause every few verses to listen to their animated debate. It seems that they are arguing about whether or not the guy in the window seat is, in fact, single—and whether it would be cheating on the girlfriend in question if he were to elicit the affections of another lady while on vacation. Perhaps noticing my interest in the conversation, the dark-eyed man sitting directly across from me asks me what I do for a living. I pause. I imagine the simplicity of telling him that I work in Big Business. Well, I reason, I do work for The Boss. I know that he has seen the pages of Hebrew script scrawled across the tray-table on the seat in front of me and has heard me muttering strange chanting sounds under my breath. I tell him that I am studying to be a rabbi. The other two men stop arguing long enough to hear my admission.

"That's it. It's a sign from God," exclaimed the semi-single bachelor in question. I shrug. Which one of us is God? "It's not a sign from God," argues one of his pals.

"God sent her," he insisted again. "I can't do it."

That's it, I think. I am now officially a symbol. I decide to pipe in on behalf of womankind.

"Maybe it's your *girlfriend* who sent me." And I smile, trying to make light of the whole situation. For a moment, I allow myself the luxury of imagining myself to be superwoman, traveling near and far, intervening on behalf of women everywhere just before the men in their lives do stupid things to hurt them. I can tell that the two friends are less than thrilled at their buddy's newfound fidelity.

The flight attendant announces that the plane is in its final descent. We are heading directly toward Lubbock, our final destination. There, I will serve as the community's rabbi for the weekend, and eight more weekends throughout the coming year. As the plane heads for the runway, I shift in my seat, fold up the pages of Hebrew and stuff them into my red backpack.

The former president of the Temple picks me up from the airport. He'd asked how he might recognize me. I told him I wear glasses, I look Jewish. Dark, curly, shoulder-length hair. And a red backpack. Yep, that's how you find your rabbi. Your spiritual leader. You look for the red backpack coming off the airplane. I walk past the former president without his noticing me. He follows me outside, explaining that he saw the

continued on page 44